

Questions come
in waves before
cruise holidays

Barak launches electoral coalition

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israeli opposition leader Ehud Barak on Monday launched his new electoral coalition intended to oust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the polls on May 17. Flags, fireworks and a slide show of the life of assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin kicked off the inaugural convention of Barak's One Israel movement, an alliance of his Labour Party and smaller social welfare and religious parties. "We will restart the peace process from a position of strength and responsibility," Barak told a cheering crowd. "We will bring a lasting peace." Recent polls have shown Barak pulling ahead of the right-wing Likud Party incumbent Netanyahu by some five percentage points in a head-to-head run-off.

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Royal decree appoints senators

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued on Monday appointing former Prime Minister Fayed Tarawneh and former Royal Court Chief Jawad Anani as senators effective March 17. Another Royal Decree issued on Monday accepted the resignation of Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti and Adnan Abu Odeh. His Majesty King Abdullah's advisor for political affairs, from the Senate as of March 4 and 10, respectively.

U.S. to give 100,000 tonnes of food to N. Korea

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States will send some \$35 million in food aid to North Korea to alleviate long-running shortages there, the State Department said Monday. Spokesman James Foley said Washington would send 100,000 metric tonnes of corn and corn-soy blend through the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP). The WFP "has concluded that the food situation is dire" in North Korea, he said. Another official estimated the value of the new shipment at about \$35 million. Foley denied any link between the aid and North Korea's agreement last week to allow U.S. inspections of a suspected nuclear weapons facility in the tightly closed country.

U.S. sets initial retaliation list in EU beef dispute

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States targeted more than \$900 million of European Union (EU) goods for possible retaliation on Monday as it tried to force a resolution to a 10-year-old dispute over hormone-treated beef. In a telephone news conference with reporters, special U.S. trade negotiator for agriculture Peter Scher said a large portion of the preliminary list, which will be finalised sometime in early June, targets EU meat products and other agricultural goods for retaliation.

'Pinochet had million-dollar bank account'

MEXICO CITY (R) — Former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, awaiting an extradition decision from Britain's highest court, maintained a million-dollar bank account in the United States in 1997, a Mexican newspaper reported on Monday. If proven true, the existence of the account would raise questions about the origin of the funds and whether there should be an investigation. The newspaper said it conducted an exclusive investigation and turned up what it said was primary evidence that Pinochet held bank accounts outside Chile, including a joint one with his wife Lucia Hiriart at Riggs Bank in the United States.

Convicts tunnel out of Colombian prison

BOGOTA (R) — At least 17 prisoners, including drug traffickers and leftist guerrillas, tunneled out of a Colombian jail in the southwestern city of Cali on Monday and fled through drains and sewers, police said. Local media said the tunnel, which connected with the city drainage system, was at least 300 metres long. Police could not confirm this. "At least 17 prisoners have fled. They built a tunnel which linked into the drains," a Cali police spokesman said. "We are searching the sewers because it seems some of the prisoners may still be down there."

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

Khatami to visit S. Arabia after Haj

LONDON (R) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami has told Saudi Arabia's King Fahd that he planned to visit Saudi Arabia after the end of the Haj season, Iranian television reported on Monday. The report, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation in London, said the news was conveyed to the Saudi monarch in a letter from Khatami delivered by Iran's ambassador to Riyadh. "Iranian President Mohammad Khatami has said he will visit Saudi Arabia once the rites of the Haj are completed," the BBC quoted Iranian television as saying. Khatami would be the highest ranking Iranian official since the 1979 Islamic revolution to visit Saudi Arabia.

King thanks nation for support, pledges to strengthen democracy

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday evening thanked the people of Jordan for their sincerity and steadfastness during what he called the "ordeal" of losing the nation's leader.

Speaking to the nation on Jordan Television, King Abdullah said that following the 40-day period of mourning at the passing away of King Hussein on Feb. 7, he wished to express the gratitude of the Hashemite family to Jordanians in the Kingdom and abroad for having faced the grave event with patience, alertness and coherence and with a sense of responsibility.

In carrying out the message of the late King Hussein, King Abdullah said, he pledged to pursue the nation's progress "in a framework of consultation and participation." The King said this pursuit would be based on fundamental principles including the respect of the Constitution and the protection of the democratic process.

He said Jordan would continue to support its brothers,

the Palestinian people, in their quest to regain their rights and establish an independent state on their national soil.

Referring to brotherly countries faced with U.N.-imposed economic sanctions, King Abdullah said Jordan looked forward to the lifting of these sanctions. He reiterated the Kingdom's stand on not interfering in the internal affairs of

any country while insisting that no one interfere in the internal affairs of Jordan.

He concluded his address to the nation saying that his speech was an outline of the process of the coming days and that he hoped for God's grace in helping the Kingdom achieve success.

Following is an unofficial translation of the text of King Abdullah's address.

I found it most appropriate 40 days after the passing away of the late King Hussein, may God have mercy on him, to express to you thanks, appreciation and pride in my kinsmen, the clan and the great one Jordanian family of all origins in all towns of the homeland,

the countryside and badia and in every part of the globe.

You have proved to be, as Al Hussein wished you to be, fulfilling your commitment to Jordan, a unique example in loyalty and authenticity, belonging, ability to surmount the ordeal with extreme virility, and with the spirit of the one coherent family which united for the good and belonging to the homeland.

You also won world admiration and appreciation, as you presented to the entire world the bright picture of Jordan, as a state of constitutional institutions, capable of facing up to challenges with strength, firmness and clear vision.

(Continued on page 2)

King, Qatari emir to discuss boosting political, economic ties

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah and Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani on Tuesday will discuss enhancing political and economic ties and the stalled Middle East peace process, an official source said Monday.

Regional and international issues, including the Arab-Israeli peace process and the continuing U.S.-Iraq crisis will also figure high on the summit agenda, the source said.

According to a government official, Sheikh Hamad's visit to Jordan is "significant, because it is aimed at rearming the economic agenda to help boost the Kingdom's performance."

The emir will be accompanied by his foreign minister and other senior officials.

Although the officials declined to elaborate on the issues to be raised during the talks Tuesday, they said economic relations are certain to top the agenda.

HRH Prince Hassan visited Qatar in 1997 in a bid to encourage Qatari investments in the Kingdom, help increase the number of Jordanians working in the emirate, and seek the resumption of financial aid to Jordan, which was suspended after the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

The two countries had agreed to set up a liaison office in Doha to coordinate and promote investment and business opportunities in Jordan, especially in the areas of tourism, industry, transportation and banking.

"Last year a Qatari delegation visited the Kingdom in a bid to fulfil the emir's wish of building a convention centre in Amman at a cost of \$15 million," said the official, who chose the location, but no designs have been prepared yet.

The official said that Qatar also showed interest in establishing a joint Jordanian-Qatari bank and proposed allocating about \$40 million for the venture, but so far no concrete steps have been taken.

"Qatar had also proposed allocating \$12 million in financial aid to Jordan for the year 1998. However, the amount was never disbursed."

Still, a joint Jordanian-Qatari venture was set up in October 1997 to build four factories in each country, to manufacture foodstuffs, clothing and petrochemicals at a total cost of \$25 million.

"Jordan appreciates the fact that Qatar was the first Gulf country to officially open its markets to Jordanian labourers," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

After the one-day official talks, King Abdullah and Her Majesty Queen Rania will host the emir in Amman for a two-day private visit.



ISRAELI SOLDIERS CLASH WITH PALESTINIANS: Palestinian youths carry an injured comrade on Monday in the West Bank village of Beit Dajan during clashes with Israeli troops. Israeli troops fired tear gas and rubber-coated steel bullets at some 200 stone-throwing youths during protests against the uprooting of olive trees outside this village, witnesses said. The Israeli soldiers were guarding bulldozers ripping up the olive trees which had been replanted nine days previously by Palestinian villagers and Israeli peace activists, the witnesses said. The army initially razed the orchard a month ago, saying it had been illegally planted in an area designated 'state land' by the Israeli authorities (AFP photo)

Queen Noor congratulates Queen Rania, leaves for U.S.

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday left on a short trip to the United States to settle her youngest children, who are completing the school terms they began last year when the late King Hussein was undergoing treatment at the Mayo Clinic.

Queen Noor congratulated Her Majesty Queen Rania, who accompanied Queen Noor to the airport, and expressed her pride in her accomplishments and affirmed her continuous

support to her and to His Majesty King Abdullah. Members of the Royal family were at the airport to bid farewell to Queen Noor.

Also on Monday, HRH Crown Prince Hamzah sent a congratulatory letter to Queen Rania, expressing deep affection and appreciation.

Prince Hamzah praised the Queen's efforts in all fields to serve the nation and its noble objectives.

Queen Rania also received cables from the

president of the Judicial Council and the Court of Cassation, Taher Hikmat, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mir'i Kaabneh.

General Intelligence Department Director Samih Battikhi, Civil Defence Department Director Theeb Maani, Public Security Department Director Nasouh Muheiddin, Chief Islamic Justice Izzedin Khathib Tamimi and Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid.

Arafat, Chirac discuss Palestinian statehood

PARIS (AFP) — The possibility of Palestinians declaring statehood on May 4 despite Israeli objections was the focus of talks Monday between Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and French President Jacques Chirac.

During over an hour of talks the two leaders "wrote over the context of a May 4" declaration of independence and "reflected on the best way of helping all sides to clear this hurdle and of boosting the peace process," Chirac's spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said.

Asked by reporters if he was seeking international guarantees to postpone the May 4 declaration, Arafat merely said that "a precise and honest application of [earlier] decisions" was necessary.

He recalled that in compliance with the Oslo accords, the Palestinian National Authority had the right to declare statehood after five years but said the proclamation was the responsibility of all parties to the accord.

"This is not for me to decide alone," he said.

Arafat, on a tour of European capitals and the United States to discuss the May 4 date, has hinted several times in the last few days that the proclamation of a Palestinian state could be delayed.

Israel has threatened to annex parts of the West Bank if the Palestinians go-ahead with the proclamation.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on a

visit to Moscow, vowed a tough response should Arafat push ahead with a plan to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state in May.

"I am issuing a new warning to the Palestinian Authority: Israel will react in the toughest possible way in the event of a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," Netanyahu told Israel Radio on Sunday.

Arafat left Paris for Washington in the early afternoon after meeting French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. No details were available about the Palestinian leader's talks with the premier.

In Washington, Arafat is to meet with President Bill Clinton.

Arafat had arrived in

Paris from Sweden where top officials advised him to postpone plans to declare independence on May 4, when the interim peace accords signed with Israel expire.

France supports Palestinian rights to self-determination but Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine has questioned whether the state of Palestine should be declared on May 4, saying such a proclamation should be made "in the best conditions."

In Stockholm, Arafat was told Sweden fully believes Palestinians have the right to declare statehood, but that timing was important.

Arafat has also visited Greece and Austria as part of his six-day tour to discuss the May 4 date. He will wrap it up in Ottawa.

Netanyahu raises technology leaks to Iran with Primakov

nuclear technology to Tehran is a long-running sore affecting ties between the two capitals and has also dogged Moscow's relations with Washington, which regards Iran as a rogue state.

For his part Primakov said: "I can quite clearly and unequivocally say that Russia observes all international norms relating to export controls and does everything necessary to exclude any leaks that would help the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."

"It has been and remains our policy," he said.

Earlier Netanyahu said Israel could work with Russia over the troubled Middle East peace process, praising Primakov for his in-depth knowledge of the region.

"Of course we are very happy to discuss the matters of the Middle East because you are an expert," Netanyahu told Primakov, a former foreign minister with close ties to a number of Arab leaders in the region.

"I feel we can talk very comfortably... with someone who understands our neighbourhood very well," the Israeli leader said.

Russia is a co-sponsor of the Middle East peace accords signed between Israel and the Palestinians, although Moscow continues to play second fiddle to Washington in the region.

The troubled peace accords face a new threat, Netanyahu vowing a tough response should Palestinian President Yasser Arafat push ahead with a plan to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state in May.

Political reforms were not explicitly part of this government's mandate [as defined in the Royal letter of designation], but Rawabdeh has said everything can be discussed, declared himself willing to amend the press law, and said the elections law can be discussed, too," Nimri said.

Rawabdeh's resolute rejection of Israel's intention to reduce Jordan's water share this year below the amount stipulated under the 1994 peace treaty won him some precious points among the opposition.

"With the government being firm towards Israel, there will be less room for clashes with the parties," said Nimri.

Analysts agree that Rawabdeh will not have an easy task in restoring political parties' confidence in the executive authority.

Legalised only in 1992 after three decades of martial laws, parties have long expressed disappointment and frustration at what they consider insufficient democratic reforms and lack of sincere government recognition of their role in decision and policy-making.

A "national dialogue" called for by then-Crown Prince Hassan following the opposition's boycott of the 1997 general elections failed to take off due to the inability of successive governments and the opposition to reach an agreement on the agenda and mechanisms of the proposed dialogue. Now, hopes are high that Rawabdeh will succeed where his two inaudited predecessors, Abdul Salam Majali and Fayez Tarawneh, failed.

Even the usually sceptical secretary general of the leftist Hashd

party, Salem Nahhas, who described himself as "hardened and disillusioned" by too many political defeats, conceded he was "optimistic" that Thursday's meeting with Rawabdeh would bring some, if not immediate, results.

Other opposition figures were more hopeful. "Not only is there a new government, it is also a new era for the country," said a moderate Islamist leader who asked not to be named. "The dialogue must succeed," he said, because His Majesty King Abdullah, who ascended to the Throne on Feb. 7, "wants a fresh, new start."

Following King Abdullah's meeting with the council of the Jordan Press Association on Wednesday, Rawabdeh declared his readiness to amend the press law.

King Abdullah also met with the

Party leaders upbeat ahead of first meeting with prime minister

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — Political party leaders on Monday prepared for an upcoming meeting with Prime Minister Abdur-Rauf S. Rawabdeh amid unusual, though moderate, optimism that the new government will listen and introduce wider freedoms.

The Higher Committee for Coordination among the Opposition Parties, grouping 13 parties, drafted in a meeting on Monday a list of requests that will be submitted to Rawabdeh on Thursday at his first meeting with all party leaders since he took office on March 4.

There will be nothing new on the opposition's agenda: amendments to the strict press law; abrogation of the one-person, one-vote electoral formula introduced in 1993; a halt to the privatisation process,

NEWS ANALYSIS

eration.

But what appears to be new is the climate of relations between Jordan's 20 political parties and the government headed by an outspoken career politician with 10 years of experience as a Lower House deputy and five years of experience as head of the former Reawakening Party.

"There is a positive and relaxed atmosphere," analyst and politician Jamil Nimri, who will represent the social-democrats of the Democratic Party of the Left at Thursday's meeting, said on Monday.

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Blast at Iraqi oil pipeline caused by bomb attack

ANKARA (AFP) — An explosion at a pipeline exporting Iraqi oil through Turkey was caused by a bomb attack, reliable sources said on Monday.

Supplies through the pipeline from Kirkuk in northern Iraq to Ceyhan in southern Turkey were blocked after a section was hit by an explosion Sunday in the Turkish province of Mardin.

Pumping was to resume later Monday after repairs, the sources said.

In Iraq, oil sources said the incident had not affected the loading of Iraqi crude at Ceyhan, on the eastern Mediterranean.

The attack, which did not cause any casualties, could have been the work of the separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) as part of protests marking the Kurdish new year, Nawroz, the Turkish sources said.

Several previous attacks on the pipeline have been attributed to the PKK.

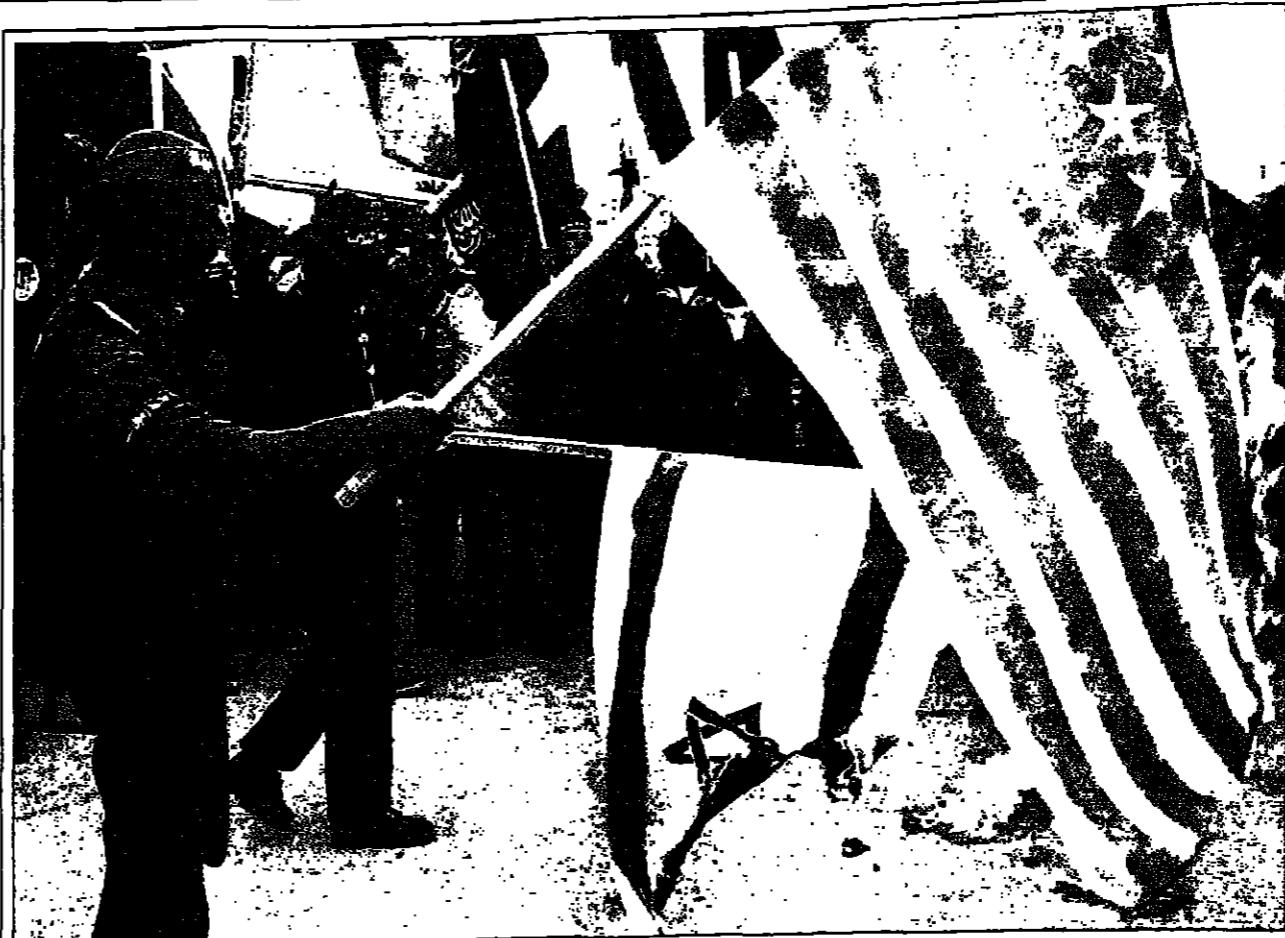
The pipeline carries half of Iraq's oil exports as authorised by the United Nations. It was already shut down from February 28 to March 4, after U.S. air strikes knocked out a relay station in northern Iraq.

Under U.N. resolutions, the larger share of Iraqi oil exports are supposed to pass along the pipeline through Turkey while the rest is exported from Iraq's own terminal of Mina Al Bakr on the Gulf.

But U.N. experts in New York said earlier this month that only 44 per cent of exports were currently passing through the pipeline. Iraq is exporting at a rate of 1.9 million barrels a day.

The shutdown came as OPEC ministers, including Iraq, prepared to meet in Vienna on Tuesday to ratify cuts in their output quotas and ease pressure on prices.

Baghdad itself is exempted from the quota system. The United Nations said



PALESTINIAN PROTEST IN HEBRON: Palestinian students of the Islamic Jihad movement burn Israeli and American flags in the West Bank town of Hebron Monday during student elections at Hebron University. In another place in the West Bank Palestinian youths clashed with Israeli troops during a protest against the uprooting of olive trees outside the village of Beit Dajan (AFP photo)

Iraq stages mass funeral for 27 children

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The Iraqi authorities held a mass funeral on Monday for 27 children, saying they died prematurely in hospital due to a lack of facilities because of the United Nations embargo.

A cortege of cars carried on their roofs tiny coffins bearing a photograph of each dead child. "Iraqi President" Saddam

[Hussein] will avenge the children," they said.

Relatives were among about 300 people who joined the procession through the city centre intoning "Allah Akbar" [God is greatest], "America is the Enemy of God" and "Oh Arabs, see the oppression of America."

Health officials say more than

one million Iraqis of all ages have since died because of the sanctions.

The government announced that 71,279 children were among almost 160,000 Iraqis who died in 1998 because of poor health facilities or malnutrition brought on by the embargo.

Health officials say more than

Party leaders upbeat

(Continued from page 1)

"We have known Rawabdeh as a daring and bold man," said Ahmad Qablan, whose Jordanian Labour Party is based in Irbid, the premier's constituency.

"We will present the obstacles facing our and other parties, as well as the problems facing our communities, where university graduates sit at home unemployed for years," Qablan told the Jordan Times in an interview on Monday.

Most groups, including the centrist National Constitutional Party with its affluent membership of former officials and tribal leaders, have asked for state funding to contain their soaring deficits.

Phone lines at many party headquarters have been cut off

for months now, while those which initially waived membership fees for women in an attempt to encourage female representation have been forced to end the policy.

Unemployment, officially estimated at 16 per cent but unofficially placed at up to 27 per cent, and Jordan's chronic water shortage, which may result in severe rationing this summer and losses of up to \$150 million in the agriculture sector, will figure high on the agenda during Thursday's discussions.

But so will human rights, party leaders said.

"There is a lot to be done to make the people feel free, and convince them that they can say what they think," said Qablan.

"Hopefully, we will get there."

Israel says Egypt ensuring safety of deported bedouin

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel said Monday it had received assurances from Cairo for the safety of more than 600 Bedouin who are to be forced back to Egypt this week after seeking refuge in the Jewish state.

With Israel's permission, the Egyptian army will set up a protected camp for the Bedouin along the border between the Sinai and Israel — a zone which was demilitarised when Israel returned the region to Egypt in 1982, the foreign ministry said.

The Bedouin from the Azazmeh tribe entered Israel illegally early last week, saying they were fleeing a bloody feud with another clan.

Members of the tribe, a

branch of which lives in Israel, also complained about mistreatment by Egyptian authorities and asked for asylum.

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon rejected the demand and Israel's supreme court upheld his decision on Sunday, ruling that the Azazmeh could not be granted asylum since they entered the country illegally.

As a result of the court decision, the Bedouin are to be deported this week, by force if necessary, Israeli officials said.

Since their arrival, the Azazmeh have been living in a makeshift camp guarded by the army in Israel's southern Negev desert.

ECIP offers European Union (EU) co-financing up to a maximum of 50 per cent

By Hind-Lara Manga

AMMAN — In a bid to attract more foreign direct investment to the country and to integrate Jordan in the world economy, the European Community Investment Partners (ECIP) programme is offering financing facilities to support joint ventures between European and Jordanian private sector investors.

Every year over \$100 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) and private capital are transferred to emerging markets.

"We can encourage European and Jordanian companies to work better together to create more productive, better quality and better developmental quality projects in this FDI flow hoping that more foreign direct investment will result," said Tom Roe head of the ECIP in Brussels.

ECIP offers European Union (EU) co-financing up to a maximum of 50 per cent

of the project cost and provides funding for feasibility studies, training and capital investment.

"We have no limit to the amount of money that can be spent in one year. The limit is on the number of quality projects with sound joint venture partners for which we receive financing requests," Roe told the Jordan Times.

A country is eligible for the ECIP programme as long as it meets EU developmental cooperation requirements.

"Any sector that is development-friendly and good for the Jordanian economy is eligible for ECIP funding," Roe explained.

Polluting industries and industries military in nature are excluded.

The programme works through a network of financial institutions and discussions have taken place between ECIP and representatives of the Jordan National Bank.

Roe said: "We use banks in

Europe and in third countries like Jordan to offer our facilities. The banks know local business, and so we train them in the use of our facilities which are then offered through the bank to local businesses."

For capital financing, banks have the obligation to co-finance reinforcing relations between private sector business and banks.

The ECIP recently began funding government feasibility studies for the mobilisation of private participation in infrastructure.

Jordan's economic reform plan, now in its eleventh year, aims to achieve annual growth rates of six per cent through fiscal and monetary policies, create an investment environment, address structural imbalances through economic liberalisation and foster a greater role for the private sector. This includes promoting private-sector export-oriented growth.

ECIP has operated in 74 countries for the past 10 years. There are now some 3,000 projects with a budget of more than \$300 million.

"We have achieved a significant multiplier effect. Of the \$300 million spent so far over \$3.7 billion has been invested," noted Roe. "Over 1,400 joint ventures have benefited from ECIP assistance."

ECIP co-finances management and technical assistance to improve profitability. It has helped governments and public agencies to prepare for privatisation on the basis of build-operate-transfer (BOT) or build-operate-own (BOO) schemes in private infrastructure.

Jordan's economic reform plan, now in its eleventh year, aims to achieve annual growth rates of six per cent through fiscal and monetary policies, create an investment environment, address structural imbalances through economic liberalisation and foster a greater role for the private sector. This includes promoting private-sector export-oriented growth.

ECIP has operated in 74

King thanks nation for support, pledges to strengthen democracy

(Continued from page 1)

You were larger than the feeling of sadness and loss, as you faced the grave event, with patience, alertness and coherence, with a sense of responsibility and keenness for the tasks of hospitality accorded to the heads of state and delegations who came to take part in the funeral of the great departed, you raised the head of the homeland high.

My grief for Al Hussein during those difficult days was only matched by my feeling of pride in you and your honourable civilised stand which will remain vivid in

my mind. I would like to express to everyone of you in every part of dear Jordan in my name and in the name of the Hashemite family and the Jordanian people our deepest thanks and gratitude. I stretch my hand to shake your hands and to say to you, your stand was the best comfort to us, may God reward you all with all the goodness.

As for the brothers, Their Majesties, excellencies and highnesses of the leaders and high-ranking officials, citizens from all world countries who were inquiring after Al Hussein on his sickbed, or those who came to Amman to take part in the funeral, to give us

their support and console us on his death, I would like to express in the name of the Hashemite family and the Jordanian people our deepest thanks, appreciation and gratitude for their noble feelings, and their support in those difficult circumstances.

Dear Brother Citizens: The great departed has devoted every minute of his life for the service of his people and nation, the building of modern Jordan, upholding the values of right, justice, freedom and respect of human rights. He passed away with clear conscience, it's God's rule for mankind, but he left us his great

message, and we will remain loyal to that message and to the noble values in which he believed, may God have his mercy on him, and to which he dedicated his life to fulfil. The Almighty God has blessed me with the prime responsibility in dear Jordan. I hereby make my pledge to you all to pursue the nation's progress, with all the strength, resolve and knowledge I have, to fulfil the noble objectives and aspirations which you, alongside Al Hussein, struggled to achieve, in a framework of consultation and participation in carrying out the responsibility and placing the homeland's interest above all

considerations and interests, relying in all of that on the national fundamentals, based on belief in God, loyalty to the homeland, respect of the Constitution, protection of the democratic process, deepening its roots and continuing the building of the state of law and institutions, working to achieve comprehensive development and advancement, remaining loyal to the message of the Great Arab Revolt of freedom, unity and social justice.

As for our brothers in Iraq, Libya and Sudan, we feel their pain under the embargo and look for the day when the embargo imposed on those peoples will be lifted, stressing that we will not interfere in the internal affairs of any country. At the same time we will not allow anyone to interfere in our internal affairs.

My brothers, kinsmen and clans, these are the outlines of our process for the coming days. I hereby lay it out to you, hoping for success to be granted by God Almighty, for your support, for your concern with work and building, with hearts filled with the love of the homeland, with keen determination and with your heads high.

I salute you with greetings of love and a sense of pride, and thank you again. I pray to God Almighty to protect you, and to grant us success for the good and interest of our homeland and nation.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Eating and Health
19:30 News headlines
19:33 Thalassa
20:30 Plotlands
21:15 Beyond 2000
22:00 News in English
22:30 Mozart/French

PRAYER TIMES

04:15 Fajr
05:33 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:42 Dhru
15:10 'Asr
17:52 Maghreb
19:10 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swieifieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Santa Church Tel. 4623366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Aafra Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-
ter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Swei-
feh Tel. 5920146

The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The American Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department
of Meteorology

AMMAN:
Dr. Bilal Sayyid 4890280
Dr. Avni Hawamdeh 5332350
Dr. Tawfiq Qub'an 463029
Dr. Khalidoun Asfour 5332600

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Temperature expected to rise
and skies partly cloudy. Occasional rain showers are expected
during the day with winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it
will be warm, winds northerly
moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 05/15
Aqaba 12/24
Deserts 04/18
Jordan Valley 11/22

IRBID:
Dr. Ali Shuaib (03)700669
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad (05)985550
Palestine Pharmacy (05)983562

Following are the temperatures
expected today in the following
areas:

Ajloun 03/13
Jerash 06/18
Um Qays 05/18
Madaba 04/15
Petra 05/17
Dead Sea 11/24

USEFUL
TELEPHONE
NUMBERS
NIGHT DUTY

Telephone Information (directory
assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs
..... 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (05)983323

Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int'l. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Spe-
cial Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdii 56611317
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 46442816
Akileh Maternity 46424411/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas J. Arman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdai 5664110
Italian, Al-Muhajireen 4771010/13
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al-Amal Cancer Centre 5333000
Jerusalem Hospital 4387181

FOR THE
TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA
AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport Tel.
(44)153200-5, where it should
always be verified. Information on
other flights can be supplied on
phone 44 (52700). Information on
Royal Wings flights can be sup-
plied on phone 4875201-5

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:25 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
07:30 Damascus (RJ)
09:50 Tehran, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)

ARRIVALS

07:15 Tel Aviv (RJ)
10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)<

Rain quenches land, but wells still thirst

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — Although Jordanians were optimistic that the recent rainfall might help minimise the effects of the current drought, officials said on Monday the volume of water collected did not add much to the Kingdom's main water dams.

"Unfortunately, with this serious state of drought, the land is so dry that it immediately absorbs every single drop of water," said one official. "As a result, dams can only collect water after at least two days of continuous rainfall."

According to the recent available statistics, water levels in the King Talal Dam has dropped from 72 million cubic metres (mcm) to 33 mcm. Wadi Arab Dam from 16 mcm to 9.8 mcm, Ziqab Dam from 3.5 mcm to 1.2 mcm. Shab'ab Dam from 134 mcm to 34.000 cubic metres. Kafrain Dam from 8.5 mcm to 37.000 cubic metres and the desert and Karameh dams are nearly empty.

Jordan relies mainly on rainwater to meet domestic, agricultural and industrial water needs, which is tapped from surface water sources, such as rivers, and renewable groundwater sources. Rainfall, which dipped to just two per cent of the seasonal average in December and January, accounts for about 60 per cent of Jordan's water supply.

Around 300 mcm of water is used annually for domestic purposes, while industry consumes 50 mcm and agriculture around 650 mcm.

His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday said immediate action must be taken to set up short- and long-term solutions to develop water resources and ration consumption in order to help fend off Jordan's chronic water shortage, "the most pressing national issue."

The government will declare its contingency plan to cope with the drought the worst in 50 years, on April 1. High on the list of priorities will be bringing under government control 1,650 privately-owned wells, rationing

water supplies and possibly banning some high water consumption crops, according to officials.

The problem has been exacerbated since Israel declared its plans to cut water amounts to Jordan stipulated in the 1994 peace treaty by 40 per cent. The Kingdom has strongly rejected the proposal and insisted on obtaining its rightful water share stipulated in the treaty's water annex.

Under the peace treaty,

Israel extracts 12 mcm of water from the Yarmouk River in summer, and Jordan uses the rest. In winter, Israel takes 33 mcm from the river, of which 20 mcm are stored for Jordan in Lake Tiberias for the Kingdom's use in summer. According to the treaty, Jordan and Israel should cooperate to supply the Kingdom with an additional quantity of 50 mcm of drinkable water every year.

But Israel said it was not able this winter to collect the 20 mcm from the Yarmouk because of a regional drought.

The government reported that Jordan's water deficit for the second half of this year is projected at approximately 10 percent with demand totalling 283 mcm and supply amounting to 254 mcm.

Official figures suggest that by the year 2000, Jordan's population, growing at around 3.5 per cent per year, will require 1,257 million cubic metres of water to cover minimum needs; resources will be capable of supplying only 960 mcm.

Meanwhile, deputising for Prime Minister Abdur-Rahman S. Rawabdeh, Minister of Water Kamel Mahadin on Monday marked International Water Day, at a gathering at the Royal Cultural Centre held in conjunction with the United States Agency for International Development and the Jordanian Environment Society.

Participants discussed means to promote public awareness in order to help save the scarce and sacred natural resource as well as strategies and plans to cope with water shortage.

Waste not, want not

21 ways to conserve and save water in your home...

- How to spot a leaking toilet. Toilet leaks can be detected by putting dye in the toilet tank for 15 minutes. If dye can be detected in the toilet bowl, there is a leak that needs to be repaired.
- Report leaks. Remember, toilets can use 800 liters of water a day; the equivalent of eight full baths. A one-drop leak per second can use 25 liters a day.
- Be frugal when you flush. Put a water bottle filled with water or another appropriately-size plastic container inside the toilet tank, making sure the flushing unit is not hampered. Toilet flushing is one of the biggest uses of water in the home and office.
- Close the taps. Turn off the water tap while soaping in the shower, brushing teeth and shaving.
- Fill the basin of the kitchen sink to wash and rinse dishes instead of letting the water run.
- Save "waste" water. Connecting the washing machine's drain pipe to an unused bath tub or other sizeable container to store water for toilet flushing, floor cleaning or car washing. Also, make sure you adjust the water dial on your washing machine to coincide with the quantity of clothes you are washing, and run machines only when there are full loads.
- While you wait for the hot water to flow through your shower tap, collect the first cold water in a bucket to use for cleaning floors.
- Use a single bucket to wash and rinse the car, and reduce car washing altogether.
- Break out your broom. Use only a broom to clear outside areas like sidewalks and patios and make sure that gardeners are instructed to do the same.

...and garden

- Plant ground cover that requires little water rather than grass.
- Water in early morning or in the evening to minimise evaporation and water root areas of plants rather than watering the entire garden.
- Hold the hose close to the ground instead of spraying water over areas not requiring water.
- Save shower and dish water and use it for watering plants.
- Encourage roots to grow deeper into soil by spacing out the frequency of water. Roots will dig deeper in search of water, and over time, plants will adapt to needing less water.
- Add mulch to soil in areas where decadent plants require masses of water.
- Choose water resistant plants for your garden. If your garden is already planted, slowly replace failed plants with water resistant ones. These are hard to find in Amman. Most plants for sale in local shops are grown in the Jordan Valley (many in green houses) and are not suitable for Amman's cool winters and recent low rainfall, but they can be found if you look and ask for them.

Plants that tolerate the soil and climate in Amman are: Geraniums, Ground succulents, and Broom. Others are Lavender, Snap dragons, Jasmine, Castor oil plants, Hollyhocks, California poppies and Marguerite.

The Jordan Times welcomes your water-saving suggestion. Fax us on 569 6183 or e-mail us at <jotimes@go.com.jo>. Please do your part this year and help save precious water.

Two killed in tanker explosion at thermal power station

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Two men were killed Sunday in an oil tanker explosion at the Aqaba Thermal Power Station in the southern Red Sea port city, the station's chief, Khalid Shukri said on Monday.

He said the bodies of the truck driver and his assistant were charred beyond recognition at the scene of Sunday's explosion. The names and ages of the victims were not available.

"There were no other injuries," Shukri told the Jordan Times.

Fire from the explosion spread to two other tankers delivering Iraqi crude oil to

the power station in Aqaba, 300 kilometres south of Amman.

Two investigative committees, one formed by the company and the other by the Interior Ministry, have been set up to explore the cause of the explosion at the key power station which generates 61 per cent of Jordan's electricity needs.

Shukri said the plant's operations were not effected.

Shukri said the two committees are expected to submit their final reports within the coming few days.

"This is the first time that such an incident occurs in the 13-year-old power station," said Shukri.

Court cancels limit on taxi ownership

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Higher Court of Justice on Sunday cancelled a six-month old decision by the Ministry of Interior to limit the number of taxis each rank can own, ruling in favour of taxi owners, according to Defence Attorney Zuhair Abu Ragheb.

Abu Ragheb, who filed the lawsuit on behalf of the Taxi Owners Union, said the court ruled to increase the number of taxis that can be used by taxi ranks from five to 15.

According to Abu

Ragheb, the Central Traffic Committee ruled in 1996 that taxi ranks could own 15 cars, but in mid-1998, the Committee issued new regulations limiting the number of taxis that could be owned by the ranks.

Abu Ragheb said he contested the decision at court because the committee made the decision "with a lack of quorum and because the committee made a decision that would harm people's interests."

"The court accepted these arguments and cancelled the committee's decision," Abu Ragheb said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King receives credentials

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday received at the Royal Court the credentials of four newly-appointed ambassadors to Jordan. The King received credentials of Romanian Ambassador to Jordan Vasile Sofneti, the European Community Ambassador Jim Moran, Tunisian Ambassador Mohammad Habib Ka'bashi, and Iraqi Ambassador Sabah Yasin. The ambassadors visited the grave of His Majesty the late King Hussein and laid wreaths of flowers.

Hmoud new deputy chief of protocol

AMMAN (Petra) — Royal Court Chief Aboul Karim Kabarit on Monday appointed Mazen Hmoud as Deputy Chief of Royal Protocol as of March 22.

Man commits suicide

AMMAN (J.T.) — A 39-year-old man committed suicide late Sunday night by jumping from a two-storey building in Jabal Al Akhdar, according to official sources. The source told the Jordan Times that the victim first tried to take his life by slitting his wrists with broken glass, but failed, and decided to jump. He died 12 hours later at Al Bustan Hospital from brain trauma. Official sources said the reason for the suicide was unknown.

Finance Ministry to reassess fees, taxes

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Finance will begin a reassessment of building, land, and sewerage fees and taxes on May 1 in implementation of new regulations governing their imposition. Assistant Secretary General for Governorate Affairs Lutfi Abu Hazzin said the regulations are warranted by economic developments and changes in the use of buildings.

Muheisen named VTC director

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued on Monday endorsing the appointment of Muzahem Muheisen as director general of the Vocational Training Corporation as of March 7, 1999, succeeding Ali Nasrallah who recently retired.

What's Going On

AMMAN FRANCOPHONE DAYS

TUESDAY MARCH 23

- Lecture by Dr. Huda Wasfi including recital of poems by Egyptian poet Ahmad Abdel Mo'ti at 6:30 p.m.

FILM

- "Ransom" at Books@Cafe, Jabal Amman, at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 46504578).

LECTURE

- "Swedish Modern Art in Relation to Europe" by Prof. Tom Sandquist at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh at 7:00 p.m.

PLAY

- "Beauty and the Beast" at the Amman Baccalaureate School at 6:30 p.m. (There will be other performances on Tuesday March 23 and Wednesday March 24).

DIALOGUE

- Dialogue with Dr. Osama Ghazali, editor-in-chief of Al Siyah magazine, on "The International Political Changes and Their Impact on the Arab World" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Weibdeh, on Wednesday March 24 at 6:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- "Amman... A Meeting Point" by Swedish artists Ann Edholm and Hakan Rhenberg at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists, until April 22.

Jordanian workers turn focus to estranged Gulf labour market

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Tens of Jordanians are queuing up daily at the Kuwaiti Embassy to apply for jobs in the emirate following the restoration of full diplomatic ties between the two countries earlier this month.

"All my colleagues in the department feel the same, they do not want to remain in their posts," complained

even if they continue working in the Kingdom another 20 years they will not be able to upgrade their living conditions.

"We have enough excess labourers to send them to the Gulf who will pave the way for others to work instead of them," said Rami Khouri a columnist and a publisher.

"Seconding them to the Gulf will improve Jordan's relations with the Arab Gulf countries, which is very important for the Kingdom," Khouri told the Jordan Times.

Jordanian-Kuwaiti relations were officially restored earlier this month when the Jordanian embassy was reopened after eight years of fractured relations. Kuwait broke relations after accusing Jordan of siding with neighbouring Iraq during its 1990 invasion and occupation of the tiny emirate.

However, according to an embassy official, the embassy refuses to accept applications "because the embassy does not have orders from Kuwait to do so."

"I have been working in the government for 15 years, and I still do not have my own car or house," said Imad Abdulla, 39, electronic engineer, one of the hundreds of Jordanians who head to the embassy every day.

According to a senior official, Jordan has received several promises from Arab Gulf countries to recruit tens of thousands of qualified Jordanians to work there.

"We are waiting for the implementation of those promises," said the official who requested anonymity.

Daily newspapers have been awash with advertise-

ments soliciting qualified experts to work in the Arabian Gulf, giving rise to fears that the immigration of Jordanians will cause a brain drain, offsetting any capital injections into beleaguered economy.

While some politicians agree working abroad could be a golden opportunity for generally underpaid government and private sector employees, they say foreign companies will be seeking highly-experienced staff leaving behind them the less qualified workers.

"Jordanian-Kuwaiti relations were officially restored earlier this month when the Jordanian embassy was reopened after eight years of fractured relations. Kuwait broke relations after accusing Jordan of siding with neighbouring Iraq during its 1990 invasion and occupation of the tiny emirate."

Jordan, a country with limited natural resources, was once highly dependent on Jordanians working in the Gulf who used to sent home billions of dollars annually to their families. But after the Gulf war, most were forced to return home after Gulf countries terminated their contracts for reparation for Jordan's stand.

Today over 300,000 Jordanians work abroad, mainly in the Gulf, sending home JD1.5 billion annually in remittances.

Some believe that sending

The Amnesty Law: 'Complicated and incomplete'

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Despite Parliament's endorsement of a public amnesty draft law this week, many believe that deputies have delivered a law that has fallen short of His Majesty King Abdullah's objectives and the government's instructions.

"The King wanted something, the government did something else and the Parliament endorsed something that is totally different from the two," said one deputy, who requested anonymity.

"In one word the law is catastrophic."

"I hope that the King will not endorse the law and will return it to the Parliament for further amendment," the lawmaker added.

Among complaints from deputies who object to the law's final form, the most common are that it could cost

the state treasury up to JD20 million in uncollected fines and that political prisoners have been excluded from the list of those who will be allowed to walk free.

Chairman of the Lower House's Financial and Economic Committee Ali Abu Ragheb said the draft law will drain millions of dinars from the state treasury and lead to more deficit in the current year's budget.

Prime Minister Abdur-Rahman S. Rawabdeh on Sunday urged legislators not to include those who committed crimes punishable by financial penalties from the amnesty, but the new law absolves those convicted of such crimes from ever paying their dues, including foreign workers convicted of working illegally in Jordan and those who received traffic fines.

Abu Ragheb estimates that

the loss will range from JD10-20 million.

"This law has not been carefully prepared and I believe it will have devastating consequences on the economy, foreign investment and on our budget," the deputy, a former minister of industry and trade, told the Jordan Times.

"It is very complicated, and it is not easy to implement. It is going to cause serious problems for the government," Abu Ragheb said.

"The law also cannot be described as a 'public amnesty' because it includes restrictions that limit the number of those eligible for release," said Saleh Arnouti, president of the Jordan Bar Association.

The draft law denies amnesty to those convicted of participating in attacks that undermined national security or of belonging to "illegal organisations," namely the members of the outlawed Al Tahrir Party who are detained for different jail terms.

Also excluded are those convicted of espionage, embezzlement, theft, drug trafficking, bounced cheques, forgery, slavery, rape, pre-meditated murder or bribery and those convicted of establishing "illegal organisations."

"Jordan is on the threshold of a new phase of its history which means that the government should turn a new page, especially with political detainees and prisoners," Arnouti told the Jordan Times.

"We cannot describe Al Tahrir Party as an illegal organisation. They and other political prisoners should have been included in the amnesty," Arnouti added.

Businessmen seek to improve competitiveness with Jordan-U.S. Business Partnership

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — Hundreds of Jordanians seeking to improve their global competitiveness

Cyclone Vance leaves trail of devastation

PERTH, Australia (AP) — One of the most savage cyclones on record left a trail of destruction along Australia's northwest coast Monday with 230-kph winds ravaging towns, closing ports and halting mining operations.

But Cyclone Vance was downgraded Monday night from its class five status earlier in the day. Vance was more powerful than cyclone Tracy, which devastated Darwin in 1974.

There had so far been no reports of injuries. But Exmouth, 1,260 kilometres northwest of Perth, bore the brunt of the damage with 30 homes destroyed, numerous buildings damaged and a trailer park flattened.

At Onslow, 130 kilometres northeast of Exmouth, half its 840 residents were evacuated and there were reports of widespread flooding and property damage.

Four oil and gas and mining operations were forced to close while the ports of Port Hedland, Cape Lambert and Dampier suspended port operations.

The State Emergency Service (SES) is assessing the damage at Exmouth. Early reports indicated the town had not escaped lightly although there were no reports of injury.

"By the time the eye passed through, the SES base had received more than 30 calls from people whose houses had disintegrated around them," regional director Ross Holmes said.

"We are expecting very large amounts of damage, although we haven't been able to do a full assessment yet." At least a third of the town's houses sustained structural damage, he said.

"We anticipate there will be a requirement for temporary accommodation for a large number of people," he said.

The Exmouth Caravan Park, a trailer park, was virtually destroyed, said employee Graham McGuinness, who rode out the blast sheltering in a shower building.

"Bits and pieces of iron and bits of caravan (are) laying everywhere," he told

North Ireland leaders prepare for new peace talks

BELFAST (AFP) — Northern Ireland's political leaders were called to a new round of talks on Monday to try to rescue the faltering peace process, with Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams saying he was ready to show flexibility.

Mo Mowlam, the British secretary responsible for the province, was meeting representatives of all the parties who supported the Good Friday peace accord of last year.

Frustrated by a year of bickering since then that has delayed the creation of a power-sharing government, she has pledged to devolve powers to a Belfast administration by Easter whether or not the parties reach a deal.

The success of the talks starting Monday depends on the Protestant Ulster Unionists led by David Trimble, and the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein.

Trimble, who is also Northern Ireland's First Minister, refuses to form an executive with Sinn Fein on board until the Irish

Republican Army (IRA) has made a start on decommissioning its weapons.

Sinn Fein insists it has a right to sit on the executive on its own merit and that it cannot ask the IRA to hand over its weapons, which to the militia is tantamount to surrender.

Adams told Monday's Irish Times he was prepared to "try to find some accommodation" to end the decommissioning deadlock.

"If Mr. Trimble is serious about trying to implement the agreement, I am prepared to stretch this leadership ... provided Trimble is prepared to stretch me."

He did not specify how such an accommodation could be reconciled with his reassertion that Sinn Fein must be in a position to get the IRA to hand over its weapons, detonators and explosives as demanded by the Unionist leader.

Leading Sinn Fein member and convicted IRA activist Gerry Kelly was due to meet IRA prisoners in the Maze prison outside Belfast later Monday to explain the situation as the devolution deadline draws closer.

U.S. experts arrive to monitor encephalitis outbreak

KUALA LUMPUR (AP) — A team of American health experts arrived in Malaysia on Monday to help the southeast Asian nation contain a deadly virus which has killed more than 50 people.

The researchers from the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention set up an office and laboratory in the Malaysian health ministry, a U.S. embassy official said. Two Australian experts were due to arrive.

The experts, invited to Malaysia by the ministry, arrived as soldiers continued to shoot thousands of pigs for the third day in an effort to exterminate all animals suspected of carrying the virus.

Japanese encephalitis, which attacks the brain and causes high fever, vomiting and coma, is transmitted from pigs to humans by the culex mosquito.

With the overnight death of a 31-year-old pig farmer, the death toll rose to 54 nationwide. At least 40 of those deaths have occurred since January in the Negri Sembilan area, 100 kilometres southeast of the capital, Kuala Lumpur.

At least 54 people suspected to be victims of Japanese encephalitis have been admitted to hospitals.

Deputy Director-General of Health Abdul Aziz Mahmood warned that a new strain of the

Australian Broadcasting Corp. Radio.

"A lot of power poles in the Caravan Park are down, a lot of the vans have been destroyed, blown away completely," resident Maureen Graham spoke of violent winds all morning.

"We've been up here for 29 years and it's by far the worst we've been through," she said. "Our patio's been absolutely demolished and the ceilings from our carport are in the middle of the road."

The Exmouth power station was shut down by Western power earlier Monday for safety reasons. It sustained flood damage, with water seeping through the building, a spokesman said.

The Bureau of Meteorology's Regional Director Len Broadbridge said Vance was now expected to charge inland through the gold fields and exit into the great Australian bight to the south of the continent.

Gale force winds and rain were also expected along a 600-kilometre coastal strip from Onslow to Denham.



Actress Gwyneth Paltrow holds the Oscar she won for best actress for her role in 'Shakespeare in Love' at the 71st Academy Awards as she arrives at the Vanity Fair post-Oscar party (Reuters photo)

'Shakespeare' takes best picture Oscar

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In a night of surprises and upsets, the romantic comedy "Shakespeare in Love" won seven Academy Awards, including best picture and best actress for Gwyneth Paltrow.

Steven Spielberg's bloody World War II epic "Saving Private Ryan" won the prize for directing and four other Oscars.

Roberto Benigni, as an Italian Jew shielding his son from the horrors of the holocaust in "Life is Beautiful," pulled off a stunning first — winning as best actor in a foreign film. The tragic-comic film, which Benigni also wrote and directed, won additional Oscars for foreign film and dramatic score.

"Elizabeth," another best picture nominee, won just one award for makeup, while the fifth contender, "The Thin Red Line," Terrence Malick's comeback movie about WW II in the Pacific, was shut out.

"Saving Private Ryan" also took prizes for cinematography, editing, sound and sound effects editing.

"Am I allowed to say I really

wanted this?" Spielberg joked as he accepted his second directing Oscar. His first was for "Schindler's List" in 1993.

Spielberg expressed gratitude to all families who lost sons in World War II and addressing his father, a veteran.

"Dad, this is for you." The unflinchingly realistic "Private Ryan" had looked as if it might become a runaway favorite early in the evening when it picked up the editing and cinematography awards, which are often precursors of best picture.

But "Shakespeare in Love," with its clever dialogue and showbusiness anachronisms, obviously entranced the academy's voters.

The last time Oscar voters split between best picture and director was in 1989, when "Driving Miss Daisy" won for best picture and Oliver Stone for "Born on the Fourth of July."

Mixed response to Kazan Lifetime Achievement Award

LOS ANGELES (R) — Elia Kazan, creator of some of Hollywood's greatest films, received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Oscars on Sunday, but many stars snubbed him for what they saw as his making a pact with the devil.

Oscar-nominated actors Nick Nolte, Ed Harris and Sir Ian McKellen were among those who sat, pointedly not applauding, rather than rise in tribute to the director of "On the Waterfront."

They were protesting his having named eight communists in testimony before the House un-American activities committee in 1952, an act that many say opened the floodgates in Hollywood and resulted in hundreds of writers, artists and directors being "blacklisted."

Even though it appeared to viewers at home that about half the hall rose, they were slow getting to their feet, and people at the ceremony said only about 20 per cent got to their feet.

Director Steven Spielberg was among the many who applauded but did not stand.

Warren Beatty, one of the leaders of the Hollywood liberal community, stood and applauded because of a personal debt to Kazan, who gave him a major break by casting him in "Splendor in the Grass" in

1961. Kazan appeared to acknowledge the controversy when he accepted the award, saying: "I want to thank the academy for its courage and generosity. I want to thank you all very much."

Then he said: "I think I can just slip away now."

The 89-year-old director did not appear backstage to answer questions by reporters.

Kazan, who won best director Oscars for "On the Waterfront" and "Gentleman's Agreement," was the hotly debated topic of this year's Oscars, with many seeing him as a symbol of the McCarthy era and the days when artists were blacklisted for their political beliefs.

His reputation for being reviled for his political acts while being revered by others for his brilliant directing skills held true on Hollywood's most glittering night.

As the stars arrived to walk the red carpet into the Dorothy Chandler pavilion where the 71st Academy Awards were being presented, a group of about 300 protesters stood across the street carrying signs saying: "Don't whitewash the blacklist" and "Blacklists shred the bill of rights."

The protesters also shouted: "Don't Stand For Kazan."

Harris, nominated for best sup-

porting actor for his role in "The Truman Show," sat stony-faced with his arms crossed, as did Nolte, who was nominated for best actor for his work in "Affliction." McKellen, nominated for best actor for his role in "Gods and Monsters," said in an interview on ABC television that he did not clap.

"I just sat and watched. A few people stood up but not too many where I was sitting." He described the presentation and the controversy surrounding it as "a piece of real theatre."

Army Archerd, Daily Variety's senior columnist, wrote in his column to be published on Tuesday: "Although those who approved were vocally audible, the silence of those who did not far outweighed them. I was seated in the theatre in Row T, seat 42, where I was able to observe the entire show and, of course, particularly the award to Kazan."

The applause may have sounded loud to the audience at home, but only about 20 per cent of the audience stood, and no one at all in my aisle or the one in front of me."

Archerd, a veteran Hollywood observer, also said: "The joy and exuberance of Sunday's Oscar winners was matched by the obvious disapproval for the Lifetime Achievement Award to Elia Kazan."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ex-President Carter opposes NATO Kosovo strikes

MARAGONDON, Philippines (R) — Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said on Monday he opposed any NATO air strikes on Serb military targets in Kosovo, saying such attacks would not hurt Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. "Most of the time... there is a peaceful alternative and I don't believe that the bombing in Kosovo is going to be successful," Carter told Reuters while in the Philippines to help launch a housing programme for slum-dwellers. "It won't hurt Milosevic and he won't be killed. Many people in Kosovo might very well be killed, depending on the intensity of the bombing and missile attacks. I hope that we can avoid that." Carter lost power to Ronald Reagan in 1980 and has since acquired a reputation as a diplomatic troubleshooter as the head of the Atlanta, Georgia, based Carter Centre. U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke was bound for Belgrade on Monday to deliver a final warning to Milosevic to call off new offensives in Kosovo, from which 70,000 civilians have fled in the past six weeks, and accept a plan granting wide autonomy to the province's ethnic Albanian majority. If Milosevic spurns the message, NATO says will be poised for air strikes to cripple Belgrade's war machine, avert a looming new refugee disaster and force the Serbs to accept a peace plan already signed by ethnic Albanians.

Italian PM praises triple Oscar-winning Benigni

ROME (AFP) — Roberto Benigni's triple Oscar-winning film "Life is Beautiful" won praise from Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema Monday. "As well as great personal success, it has brought honour to the Italian cinema and culture," D'Alema said. "Life is Beautiful," was written, directed and produced by Benigni, 46, who also played the starring role. It netted three Oscars for best film actor of 1998, best foreign film and best original dramatic score. It was only the second time the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences bestowed a top acting prize for a role in a non-English film — the first went to Sophia Loren, also Italian, in 1962 for "La Ciociara."

Cambodian police link ethnic attacks to opposition party

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — A recent spate of deadly grenade attacks against ethnic Vietnamese residents of the Cambodian capital was on Monday linked by police to the opposition party of outspoken dissident Sam Rainsy. Senior police officials, who requested anonymity, said they suspected the paymaster behind the raids was member of Sam Rainsy's self-named party and the case would be treated as politically-motivated. "I don't want to refer to any political party in particular but all I can say is that this is a case of terrorism," said Phnom Penh deputy police commissioner Ek Kret. To mark the arrest of four main suspects in the raids, police convened a special parade of the shackled men — who testified to being paid \$1,200 for each attack — and held a press conference warning of further attacks. The seven separate attacks over the past three months have left one dead and 36 others wounded. In each case the targets have been bars or cafes frequented by ethnic-Vietnamese. "The plan has been to order to attack Vietnamese immigrants in order to force them home," Ek Kret said. Sam Rainsy has frequently been alleged to have indirect links with attacks against ethnic-Vietnamese, a charge he has always denied.

Death toll from rebel invasion of S. Leone capital sharply up

FREETOWN (AFP) — An estimated 6,350 corpses have been buried in mass graves in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown since rebels invaded the city in January, health authorities announced on Monday. The death toll was more than 1,000 higher than estimate by the United Nations that more than 5,000 people died during and after weeks of fighting which devastated the capital in January. An undisclosed number of bodies had to be exhumed and reburied, according to Arthur Williams, director of laboratory services at the ministry of health. "The corpses had to be exhumed as they were initially and hurriedly buried in shallow graves near streams, backyards and on the grounds of some schools," Williams said, speaking on state radio. He also said authorities "wanted to avoid any outbreak of diseases with the rainy season due about May." Some 200,000 people in Freetown were left homeless by rebel-set fires and bombing raids carried out by the Nigerian-led intervention force, ECOMOG, which barbecued behalf of the government to rout rebels from the heart of Freetown. Rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and their allies from an ousted junta stormed the capital on Jan. 6, heavily fighting ECOMOG troops for more than two weeks before being chased into surrounding areas. The rebels have now largely retreated to areas in the north and east of the country, where for several months they have been accused of raping, murdering and mutilating the civilian population.

Catholic philosopher Jean Guitton dies aged 98

PARIS (AP) — Jean Guitton, a leading Catholic philosopher and academic who was the only layman authorised to take part in the second Vatican council in 1962, has died. He was 98. Guitton, the oldest member of the Academie Francaise to which he was elected in 1961, died Sunday afternoon at the Val-de-Grace hospital in Paris. Guitton was the author of some 30 works, mostly focusing on the relationship between Catholicism and modern thought. He also was a painter, journalist and novelist. "More than a philosopher, Jean Guitton was a master," French President Jacques Chirac said in a tribute, calling him "a dear and precious friend." Guitton was close to a number of French presidents, most notably Chirac's predecessor Francois Mitterrand. He also met frequently with Pope Paul VI whom he considered a personal friend. He was well known for works including "Pascal and Leibniz," which was published in 1950, and the eight-volume "Modern Thought and Catholicism" published between 1930 and 1955. His final work, which appeared last year, was titled "My Philosophical Testament." Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, archbishop of Paris, said Guitton "never stopped prompting his interlocutors to think and to seek truth and goodness."

World News



Serb special police forces walk behind an armoured vehicle with an anti-aircraft gun as they advance into the village of Konjevac in an attempt to clear the area from Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) guerrillas 12 km north of Pristina in the main road linking Kosovo with Belgrade. Balkan envoy Richard Holbrooke said on Monday that NATO was on the brink of launching air strikes against Yugoslav military targets unless Belgrade accepted a NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo (Reuters photo)

U.N. rights commission opens in Geneva; pressure to condemn China

GENEVA (AFP) — The U.N. Human Rights Commission opened its annual six-week session in Geneva on Monday, with China once more in the spotlight.

The commission, the U.N.'s main human rights organ, has a broad mandate, enabling it to examine any theme touching on the basic freedoms of men, woman and children that are enshrined in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights.

As was the case last year, neither the European Union (EU) nor the United States are expected to submit a resolution condemning human rights abuses in China, despite mounting pressure from global rights groups.

Human rights defenders argue that the tactic of dialogue promoted by the two trade superpowers has failed to produce progress — if anything, they say, China has backtracked on human rights by arresting scores of pro-democracy activists.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin is not expected to speak before the commission when he arrives in Geneva Friday during an official three-day visit to Switzerland.

However, Jiang is due to meet with U.N. commissioner for human rights, Mary Robinson, who paid a visit to China last September.

The commission will also review the rights situation in many countries, including the occupied Arab territories, Myanmar, Nigeria, Iraq, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, Burundi and East Timor.

The special rapporteurs tasked with compiling reports on individual countries are to hand in these documents to the 53-member commission.

The reports, documenting the latest developments, will form the basis of any subsequent human rights resolutions at the current session, which ends April 30.

The commission also examines the rights of children, women, migrant workers, as well as the themes of racism and xenophobia.

Dissident blasts Europe as Jiang meets Scalfaro

ROME (AFP) — Chinese President Jiang Zemin met Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro Monday on his first official day in Italy, but a leading dissident blasted the trip as a "shame on Europe."

Wei Jingcheng said Jiang's tour, which will also take him to Switzerland and Austria, was an "insult to human rights" aimed at seizing business opportunities while ignoring rights abuses in China.

"For these governments to invite the Chinese president to come at this time is a clear insult to the work of human rights," he told AFP at a small demonstration in the Italian capital.

Jiang, who arrived in Italy on Saturday and spent the weekend sightseeing in Venice, met President Scalfaro ahead of talks later in the day with the heads of the Italian chambers of deputies and senate.

"I'm convinced that my meetings... will help develop relations between Italy and China over time," said Jiang in a statement after arriving in Rome.

"In recent years cooperation between our two countries has borne fruit in the political, economic

and commercial, cultural and scientific fields and we look forward to further development," he added.

At the weekend in Venice, Jiang enjoyed a gondola ride amid bright spring sunshine. On Monday in Rome, however, heavy rain forced him and Scalfaro to perform a red-carpet welcoming ceremony under a colonnade.

Officially the trip is aimed at promoting economic and political ties, but risks being clouded by rights questions. Monday morning's demonstration gathered only about 10 people in the rain under a replica Statue of Liberty. Two further protests were scheduled later in the day, one by a Tibetan group in front of the Italian parliament.

Wei, bearing a placard proclaiming "Shame on Italy, and shame on Europe," noted that the visit coincided with the start of a U.N. Commission on Human Rights session in Switzerland Monday.

"Everyone is focusing on human rights, and China is the country with the worst human rights record in the world," he said. Italian officials are playing down the protests here.

"We are a country of free speech. Meanwhile Monday the Vatican's minister of foreign affairs called for "direct, effective dialogue" with Beijing to end a diplomatic impasse which has blocked its relations with Beijing for more than four decades.

"We are ready to negotiate," said Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran in an interview published in the daily Corriere della Sera.

Beijing wants the Vatican to end its diplomatic relations with Taiwan, which has been regarded by China as a renegade province since the two split in 1949 following the Chinese civil war.

Khin Nyunt, who heads

Of course people can say what they want here," Carlo Bruni, Rome's ambassador to Beijing told AFP. Wei particularly criticised European business leaders for meeting Jiang.

"This is not only a question of trying to attract investment in China, it is a question of trying to get people to tolerate the Chinese government's terrible policies on human rights," he said.

"They come to a country and say 'we'll give you this large amount of business if you continue to support our human rights policies,'" he added.

Asked if his departure for

Holbrooke says NATO on brink of Kosovo strikes

BRUSSELS (R) — U.S. Balkans envoy Richard Holbrooke said on Monday that NATO was on the brink of launching air strikes against Yugoslav military targets unless Belgrade accepted a NATO peacekeeping force in Belgrade later on Monday.

Brussels to brief NATO ambassadors and military chief General Wesley Clark at alliance headquarters, was due to hold last-ditch talks with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade later on Monday.

Russia's mediator on

Kosovo, Boris Mayorsky, will also travel to Belgrade to try and persuade Milosevic to sign a deal on the future of the southern Serbian province, Russian news agencies said.

Holbrooke said the consequences would be "clear and severe" if the Yugoslav leadership failed to drop its resistance to a NATO-led peacekeeping force for Kosovo.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and his French counterpart Hubert Vedrine both said NATO was united behind the policy which threatens Yugoslavia with air

strikes unless it agrees to a peaceful political settlement.

Cook said the 80-minute meeting with Holbrooke was "grave and serious." "We are deeply concerned with the situation on the ground," he added.

He said Milosevic would be told that he had to agree to an international military presence to keep the peace in Kosovo, without which no ceasefire would hold, and to stick to pledges of military restraint made last October.

Stressing that nothing short of a NATO-led peacekeeping force would do, Holbrooke said the allies were well aware last October of the weakness of a strategy that relied on an unarmed observer mission, which had indeed failed in the end to prevent a resumption in fighting.

A force of over 1,000 monitors under the control of the

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe was withdrawn from Kosovo at the weekend.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said: "We'll support Holbrooke's mission. There's no difference between the positions of Britain, France, the United States and Germany."

"The situation is very serious, it's a last try to convince Belgrade it should sign the accord so that peace can prevail in Kosovo. We have to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe," Fischer said.

Spanish Foreign Minister Abel Matutes, attending a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels, said: "It's clear that in Kosovo the situation is extremely tense and that Milosevic is cutting off all the routes for a solution to the crisis."

Russia warns against NATO air strikes

MOSCOW (AP) — Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov warned Monday that Russia is totally opposed to possible NATO air attacks against Yugoslavia and said efforts to find a political solution must not be abandoned.

"We are categorically against the use of force against Yugoslavia. We believe that political levers to influence the situation are far from being exhausted yet," Primakov told reporters after meeting with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Asked if his departure for

the United States on Tuesday on a state visit might be postponed because of the situation in Kosovo, Primakov was evasive.

"I hope there will be no raids," he responded.

NATO has warned it may use force if Milosevic does not accept a political interim settlement in the province where Yugoslav forces are battling separatist guerrillas.

Russia, an ally of Yugoslavia, has argued for months against the use of force, saying only a political solution can work.

Moscow is keen to retain its political influence in the region and still sees NATO as a threat to its own security.

Warning against the use of force, Primakov said: "That would have an irreparable destabilising effect on the situation in Kosovo, the former Yugoslavia, Europe and the whole world."

Moscow is also unhappy about the global dominance of the United States at a time when Russian power is dwindling.

"We must attract the sides to the negotiation table, make mutual concessions and compromises," he said.

Myanmar junta member arrives in Laos

HANOI (AFP) — Myanmar junta First Secretary Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt arrived in Vientiane Monday for a three-day visit to Laos for talks likely to centre on ASEAN affairs, diplomats said.

Talks with high ranking Lao officials may also cover trade and drugs issues and be joined by Myanmar Foreign Minister Win Aung who is already in Laos, sources in the capital said.

Khin Nyunt, who heads

Myanmar's military intelligence, is also likely to discuss anti-narcotics efforts during the visit.

"They regard Myanmar as an important country because of their common border and they are working hard on narcotics issues," said one Western diplomat. The two countries are the newest members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which also groups Brunet, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Laos and Myanmar form two corners of the infamous "Golden Triangle" opium growing region, which also includes Thailand.

Myanmar's claims that it is serious about fighting drug production and trafficking were boosted last month when world police body Interpol offered a strong endorsement of its anti-narcotics drive at a conference in Yangon.

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8 Economy

U.S. to push for Jordan's WTO membership before 2000

AMMAN (AFP) — The United States has pledged to back Jordan's efforts to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) before the end of the year. The U.S. ambassador to Jordan William Burns has said.

"One of the major goals ... especially in the next few months, is to do as much as we can to support Jordan's goal to become a member of the World Trade Organisation by the year 2000," Burns added.

Burns said the drive follows the signing in Washington last week of a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) between Jordan and the U.S., and stressed the urgency of concluding Jordan's negotiations with the WTO.

"If Jordan is unable to win the membership of the WTO by the year 2000 the likelihood is that it is going to make the bar that much higher for Jordan to get over," he indicated.

The ambassador also stressed the need for Jordan to press ahead with updating legislation on intellectual property rights (IPRs) before it can join the organisation.

"There are a lot of companies that are interested in doing business that aren't going to do it unless they have that kind of security about protection of patents and copyrights," he said.

He cited the example of Beirut where the U.S. firm Microsoft announced it would open a regional office the day parliament endorsed a long-awaited IPR bill.

The TIFA agreement provides a framework for U.S.-Jordanian public and private sector dialogue on trade issues such as industrial standards and copyright protection to increase investment opportunities in Jordan.

Jordan is in the process of making its trademark and patent laws consistent with the WTO agreements on intellectual property rights.

Trade between the WTO's 134 member states accounts for more than 90 per cent of all international trade.

\$600 to \$800b needed to solve water crises — World Bank

CAIRO (AFP) — Between \$600 and \$800 billion is needed over 10 years to solve water shortages threatening to trigger armed conflicts in the world, World Bank Vice President Ismail Serageldin said here Monday.

Experts, however, said raising huge amounts of funds would be difficult for poorer countries which suffer the most from water shortages combined with a population explosion.

The world's population is expected to climb from six billion people in 2000 to nine billion people in 2025, and as a result global water resources should increase by 20 per cent, the experts said.

The chief executive officer of the French water giant Suez-Lyonnaises des Eaux, Jerome Monod, appealed for alternative and less costly solutions that are adapted to each country's need.

Former World Bank president Robert McNamara stressed that the water problem was first and foremost political.

"The basic problem of water is political. It is basically a national problem," he said, urging the experts to search for solutions on a national level.

Officials and experts from the United Nations, the World Bank and the World Water Council have been meeting here since Saturday.

They will elect a new water commission to highlight the urgency of the world's limited water supplies.

Oil price rise seen not all good news for Arab Gulf oil states

DUBAI (AFP) — The rise in oil prices is not all good news for the Arab Gulf petromonarchies, experts said ahead of Tuesday's OPEC conference to ratify production cuts.

They said a sustained price recovery would revive projects in rival fields such as the Caspian, slow down an economic revival in Asia and could also prompt Gulf states to shelve economic reforms.

That would be \$4 a barrel higher than the average price in 1998.

"The Saudis have turned back to the logic of price controls, after more than a year of following a policy of gaining market shares," said Naji Abi Aad, an adviser at the France-based Observatoire Méditerranéen de l'Energie.

The collapse of prices, which even dipped below \$10 a barrel at the end of 1998, slashed the revenues of OPEC states by 35 per cent.

But "Gulf states want to turn to pressing matters. They need the money to finance development projects," said the adviser of a state oil company in the region, contacted from Dubai. "The only way to get that for now is to raise prices."

Saudi Arabia spearheaded a campaign which culminated on March 12 with an accord in The Hague between OPEC and non-member states to slash more than two million barrels a day off world output to reverse the collapse in oil prices.

Despite the short-term economic costs, Gulf states would have been able to take advantage of low prices to nibble away at market shares at the expense of more costly oilfields in the Caspian Sea, Venezuela and North Sea.

"The price fall put into question the profitability of Caspian projects. But a recovery will give

them a new lease of life," said Abi Aad, noting Caspian production costs are \$7-\$8 a barrel compared to \$1-\$2 in the Gulf.

Abi Aad also pointed to the impact of price rises on the energy-hungry Asian economies.

"The more prices rise, the more it will slow down the recovery of Asian economies, thus delaying increased demand and real improvement on the (oil) market," he said.

Also, the upside of low prices was that Gulf states embarked last year on reforms such as privatisation, a policy which they would be tempted to abandon because of the "high cost in social terms," Abi Aad said.

In Gulf banking circles, the mounting pressure on the treasury in Riyadh because of low prices could explain the turnaround in Saudi oil policy in favour of short-term benefits.

A wave of speculation on the Saudi riyal since last year was fuelled by rumours of a possible devaluation, flatly denied by Riyadh.

One Gulf banker said the kingdom had opted for higher prices rather than launch unpopular fiscal reforms that would hit the pockets of their nationals.

ILO: Over 24m jobs lost in South Asia

GENEVA (AFP) — More than 24 million jobs have been lost in East Asia since financial turbulence began in the region. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has warned.

Most of the jobs had been lost in the modern, industrial and service sectors of the economies, where wages, productivity and working conditions tended to be higher than average, said the ILO.

These closures had forced large numbers of workers into crowded and low-paying sectors such as farm work and to eke out a living in the informal economy.

The ILO issued an update on job losses ahead of a two-day seminar on Asia's persistent unemployment crisis and ways to minimise the social fallout.

"Under current trends the upward spiral of unemployment growth appears to be slowing, but unemployment

is still increasing from record high levels in most of the region's labour markets, with often disastrous consequences for workers and their families," the ILO said.

Unemployment rates between 1996 and 1998 have nearly doubled in Hong Kong, China and the Philippines, according to ILO data.

Indonesia's unemployment rate is currently estimated by the ILO at 15 to 20 per cent, up to five times as high as the rate in 1996, before the Asian troubles began.

In South Korea, an estimated 7.6 per cent of the workforce are out of work, compared to 2.6 per cent two years ago, while the Malaysian figure has almost tripled to around 6.7 per cent.

Thailand's jobless rate is estimated at eight per cent, against 1.1 per cent in 1996.

Saudi Oil Minister Ali

Jordan Times, Tuesday, March 23, 1999

Monday, 22-03-99										ACCESS 4646868	
CURRENCY	JORDAN DINAR	US DOLLAR	EURO	GERMAN MARK	UK POUND	QATAR RIAL	KUWAIT DINAR	EGYPTIAN POUND	ISRAELI SHEKEL	BRITISH POUND	US DOLLAR
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8780	1.8387	0.1945	2.3263	0.2077	0.7582		
SAUDI RIYAL	5.2973	1.0000	1.0208	6.9453	9.7403	1.0301	12.3233	1.1006	3.6742		
UAE DIRHAM	5.1893	0.7986	1.0000	7.9454	9.5416	1.0091	12.0716	1.0781	3.6742		
BAHRAM DINAR	5.5325	0.7005	0.1028	1.0000	0.9791	0.1035	1.1153	0.3851	0.3770		
OMAN RIAL	0.5489	0.1027	0.1048	1.0214	1.0000	0.1055	1.2652	0.1153	0.3851		
QATAR RIAL	5.1427	0.9708	0.9910	8.9578	9.4559	1.0000	11.9632	1.0684	3.6140		
KUWAIT DINAR	0.4299	0.0811	0.0828	0.8073	0.7904	0.0836	1.0000	0.0892	0.3044		
EGYPT POUND	4.6136	0.9087	0.9278	9.0396	9.6528	0.9350	11.1975	1.0000	2.0244		
LEBANON LIRA	21.2268	4.0075	4.0609	39.6714	38.0539	4.1280	49.3839	4.4102	15.0300		
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2886	0.2722	2.6525	2.5971	0.2746	3.2957	0.2834	1.0000		
BRITAIN STERLING	0.8682	0.1633	0.1673	1.6304	1.5663	0.1688	2.0194	0.1804	0.6147		
GERMANY MARK	2.5379	0.4791	0.4881	4.7550	4.6584	0.4935	5.9037	0.5272	1.7398		
SWITZERLAND FRAN	2.0726	0.3913	0.3954	3.8923	3.8109	0.4030	4.8214	0.4336	1.4674		
FRANCE FRANC	8.5110	1.0007	1.0401	15.9833	16.4844	1.0550	18.7989	1.1768	6.2258		
JAPAN YEN	1.8576	0.3129	0.3194	3.1130	3.0479	0.3223	3.8561	0.3444	1.1736		
HOLLAND GULDEN	2.8593	0.5338	0.5610	3.9388	3.2575	0.5580	4.5940	0.5940	2.0244		
SWEDEN KRONA	11.5987	2.1855	2.2551	21.7822	21.3268	2.2554	26.5818	2.2429	8.2119		
ITALY LIRA	25.1239	4.7428	4.8415	47.1822	46.1958	4.8854	58.4429	5.2194	17.7877		
BELGIUM FRANC	52.3432	9.8811	10.0688	98.2997	96.2445	10.1762	121.7644	10.8747	37.0590		
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	2.2395	0.4228	0.4316	4.2057	4.1178	0.4253	5.2095	0.4562	1.5855		
GREECE DRACHMA	4.1739	0.7879	0.8043	7.6385	7.6746	0.8116	8.7035	0.8671	2.9351		
CYPRUS POUND	0.7516	0.1419	0.1448	1.4114	1.3619	0.1461	1.7483	0.1551	0.5371		
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	17.8537	3.3703	3.4405	33.5286	32.8279	3.4717	41.5324	3.7090	12.5404		
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1364	0.4037	0.4121	4.0159	3.9350	0.4159	4.9745	0.4442	1.5184		
EURO	1.2972	0.2449	0.2500	2.4362	2.3853	0.2523	3.0177	0.2653	0.9184		

CURRENCY	JORDAN DINAR	US DOLLAR	EURO	GERMAN MARK	UK POUND	JAPAN YEN	HOLLAND GULDEN	ITALY LIRA	BELGIUM FRANC	SWITZERLAND FRAN	FRANCE FRANC
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.6286	0.5595	0.6815	0.1850	0.8521	0.4940	5.6219	1.0892		
BRITAIN STERLING	0.8147	1.0000	0.3421	0.4169	0.1020	0.5237	0.3036	3.4556	0.6692		
GERMANY MARK	1.7988	2.8232	1.0000	1.2245	0.2862	1.5310	0.8876				

Business & Finance

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Unified Company for Organising Land Transport to distribute a 9% dividend

** THE GENERAL assembly of the Unified Company for Organising Land Transport has approved the distribution of JD450,000 in dividends to shareholders at a rate of nine per cent. The company posted a JD921,000 net profit last year compared to JD13 million at the end of 1997. The financial statement of the company as of Dec. 31, 1998 showed current assets at JD5.3 million compared to JD7.3 million at the end of 1997 and total assets at JD9.6 million (JD9.5 million).

Board Chairman Mohammed Dalabih indicated that the transport sector was passing through difficult circumstances and that in light of changing developments, the company has completed building a truck stop on 31 dunums of land in order to cement the capabilities of the company in the land transport sector. The truck stop includes large space for parking, commercial stores, service station, restaurant and a supermarket and will be operational once electricity and water connections to the truck stop are completed. Dalabih said noting that these facilities are in the final stages.

The chairman spoke about three projects which the company was undertaking in

Aqaba, Zarqa and Quweirah. He said the firm has started implementing a project for a new truck stop in Aqaba after the Cabinet approved giving the company ownership of 1,000 dunums in the Rashidiyah area. Dalabih added that the project, estimated to cost JD4 million, is expected to be completed by Aug. 1 1999. This project will include restaurants, banks, garages and service stations and will organise the entry of trucks to the port," the chairman pointed out.

"The truck stop at the Zarqa Free Zone will be completed by the end of this month at a cost of around JD500,000," Dalabih said. "The truck stop at Quweirah in the governorate of Aqaba is expected to be completed at a cost of JD250,000 by June of this year and to be operational by August 1999."

Other financial data about the company's operations last year showed total earnings at about JD1.2 million and total shareholders' equity at JD6.85 million. According to the annual bulletin, the company transported more than 4.3 million tonnes of goods inside and outside Jordan and paid JD4.2 million in transport charges (Al Dustour + Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq).

Islamic Bank boosts profit by 40%

** JORDAN'S ONLY interest-free bank, the Jordan Islamic Bank for Finance and Investment, has said its profits grew by 40 per cent last year because of profitable investments.

The bank made JD4.4 million (\$6.2 million) in net profit last year, said Mahmud Hasoubi, the bank's chairman.

"The profits were generated from successful investments in various economic projects," such as housing, construction and commercial transactions, he said.

Hasoubi said the bank—with a capital of JD22 million (\$30.9 million)—invested JD481 million dinars (\$67.4 million) in various projects last year.

The bank prohibits interest under Islamic law. It offers interest-free loans that are virtually turned into shares in whatever projects the bank has funded.

Hasoubi said the bank's total assets grew by nine per cent in 1998 to reach JD706.8 million (\$99.5 million).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're so smart, you might surprise even yourself with an idea you come up with today. It makes a problem you've been dealing with look simple. In fact, you might even feel a little stupid, when you realise how hard you've been making it. You do love a challenge, that's for sure, but you may have to find a new one.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're generally very careful with your money, but today it could almost be easy come, easy go. Looks like a friend is in need and has a pretty good sob story. Remember the old adage about teaching a person how to be a fisherman instead of just giving them the fish? It works better, and saves money for the next time.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're pretty smart, but sometimes you tend to get a little nervous. That could happen today, if you're thrust into a position of authority. If you find yourself tongue-tied and confused, just focus on your overall objective.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) If you can avoid travelling today, it's probably a good idea. You don't have to worry about danger, really, but delays could certainly mess up your plans, and you might get to your destination only to find that what you needed was here. If you're going shopping, let your fingers do the walking first.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) Yesterday, you were the one with the communication difficulties, but today it could be the other way around. Offer your objective insights if you notice a friend making matters worse. When emotions get involved, it's hard for people to see clearly. The buttons being pushed today aren't yours, so you can provide the insight that's required.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) An older person wants to order you around today. The only problem is, you know more about what's going on than he or she does. Don't you just hate it when this happens? You have to be diplomatic, firm, gentle, loving and persuasive, to make sure things stay on the right track. But you can do it.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You have great talent, and you ought to exercise it. Somebody else who believes in you can really push you to succeed and make a big difference in your life, but the biggest difference comes when you believe in yourself. Go ahead and do that, even if you still have a few fears to the contrary.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) If money is still on our mind, perhaps you ought to review your options. List all the possibilities, plus their interest rates, how many points they charge and whether or not they want your first-born child as collateral. Shop, but don't buy quite yet.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Again we have some sort of stumbling block in the way. Well, they say that stumbling blocks are really steppingstones: it just depends on your attitude and your altitude. Keep that in mind today, and watch where you're going.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Paperwork is your theme again today, but this time there's a twist. It looks like you could make some money, as well pay it out. Fill out all the forms you find for contests and rebates. One of them could turn out to be valuable. The question is, which one? You'll just have to wait and find out.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Love and romance go together for most people, but for you, it's more like love and learning. You like to fall in love with the kind of people who love to learn, because they're just like you are. Besides, you can be in love with lots of them at the same time, and that's great fun.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) The debate continues, whether you want it or not. Looks like this person who's giving you such a pile of trouble has a chip on his or her shoulder. How do you relate to someone who's just itching for a fight? You give a wide berth, that's all.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Christie's says business down in 1998

LONDON (AFP) — The British auction house, Christie's has said that its business had declined by 3.0 per cent last year against 1997, mainly due to the financial crisis in Asia.

Sales totalled 1.183 billion pounds (\$1.965 billion) last year compared to 1.222 billion pounds (\$2.016 billion) the previous year. However, 1997 turned out to be the second best year of all time for Christie's after 1989 which was regarded as exceptional.

While the European market continued to flourish with an increase of 7.0 per cent to 542 million pounds, sales went down by 9.0 per cent in the United States (573 million pounds) and nose-dived in Asia and the Pacific region with a decline of 29 per cent to 50 million pounds, a Christie's communiqué said.

Last year, 122 works of art fetched in excess of one million pounds.

"Christie's sales results reflect the sustained strength of the international art market," the chairman of the auction house, Lord Hindlip said, adding: "Looking ahead for 1999, we expect the market to remain healthy."

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Market forces to determine euro exchange rate — ECB vice-president

SINGAPORE (AFP) —

Market forces should be allowed to determine the direction of the euro. European Central Bank (ECB) Vice-President Christian Noyer said here against a background of debate on currency target zones.

He also said that the ECB, which determines monetary policy in the euro zone, would not bow to political

pressure regarding exchange rates.

"We will certainly never follow any pressure. We must be as much independent as being able to do something if we feel it is right even if it is advocated by governments," he told reporters.

Noyer was responding to questions about perceived political interference by some European govern-

ments on the direction of the euro.

His comments came amid a call by prominent European politicians to establish target zones for exchange rates between the euro, the dollar and the yen.

Participants at the event here expressed concern about whether the ECB could pursue a completely independent policy.

"What politicians may say will neither foster nor hinder what we are trying to do. But it doesn't mean that we shy away from discussions with politicians," Noyer said.

Germany has called for interest rate reductions in the euro zone.

Noyer added that the ECB did not have a specific trading range for the euro, which has fallen by seven per cent against the dollar since it

was launched on Jan. 1.

In Asia, the euro was being traded at about 1.10 to the dollar.

But even if the euro were quoted at 1.15 to 1.18, "it is fine for us," he said, adding that the ECB had no specific concerns about the present exchange rate.

He said: "As long as it is in the range of something that is credible in view of the underlying developments of the economies both in Europe and other parts of the world, including the United States, this is the case."

Noyer said he expected the euro to represent a significant part of the foreign currency reserves held by Asian central banks, and that the unit might assume a greater role as an anchor currency.

Hans Tietmeyer, president of the German central

Bundesbank, said that the recent fall of the value of the euro reflected market fluctuations and not a sign of inherent weakness.

Noyer said that the initial strength of the euro following its launch arose from a perception that the U.S. economy was going to weaken and the portfolio flows into Europe would strengthen.

But he acknowledged that the U.S. economy was "extremely strong" now and the feedback he received was that a portfolio shift to Europe especially from Japan would be gradual.

"I hope the market has now taken into account the new situation and has rebalanced the position of currencies. We can expect this might stabilise (within) a certain time," he said.

Asian information technology spending to rise 12% this year — market research firm

MANILA (AFP) — Asia's market for information technology (IT) products is picking up despite widespread recession and should post 12 per cent growth this year, the chairman of U.S.-based International Data Group (IDG) said here recently.

"Asian spending in information technology is starting to pick up nicely," Patrick McGovern told a business forum here.

He forecast regional IT revenue growth at 12 per cent for calendar 1999, which should make it "one of the fastest growing regions" for the industry. He gave no corresponding money figures for his forecast.

The region should be spending \$34 million of its IT budget for using the Internet by 2002, up from \$12 million last year and \$8 million in 1997, he added.

The IDG is the parent firm of technology research concern International Data Corp. (IDC). The IDC's Asia office in Singapore said last month the

regional market for personal computers (PCs) returned to pre-crisis levels in the three months to December 1998 with shipments of 2.89 million units, up seven per cent from a year earlier and 11 per cent up from the previous quarter.

McGovern said the Philippines IT market should grow 16 per cent every year in terms of revenues with tiny base of about 220,000 Internet users forecast to "grow 100 per cent every six months."

The IDC's local representative, W.S. Research Corp., said that Asia-Pacific Internet users totalled 27 million as of March this year, when the worldwide total was 154 million people.

"The regional crisis dampened the bullish forecast made last year when the number of Internet users in Asia-Pacific was projected to grow at an average of 80 per cent per year," W.S. Research Chief Neil Horillo said.

"Now, it will just keep pace with the worldwide annual

growth rate of 40 per cent," he added.

Horillo said that of the Filipinos with access to the Internet, 75 per cent had access to the World Wide Web, a number forecast to rise to 95 per cent by end-2003.

Just six per cent of Filipinos with web access spent money over the Internet last year, but the percentage should rise to 30 per cent by 2002, he added.

The dawn of Internet commerce in the Philippines is being stymied by interconnection problems with credit card issuers, said Alistair Israel, president of Internet media consultancy W.S. Fiesta Online.

"Local banks are not equipped for online transactions," with the end result that just 12 sites were set up over the past year, Israel told AFP.

He told the forum that the brave startups include a local pizza restaurant, which processed orders online but collected via "cash on delivery" basis.

London-Frankfurt stocks alliance signals early rise for English traders

LONDON (AFP) — London stock brokers will have to wake one hour earlier under plans for an alliance with the Frankfurt market unveiled by Europe's leading stock markets.

From the second half of this year both markets will harmonise trading hours, to operate between 0800 GMT and 1630 GMT, under proposals announced by the two mar-

kets. At present, the London market opens at 0900 GMT.

A spokesman for the London market said the early mornings would be the biggest change to trading practices here since the "Big Bang" of deregulation in 1986.

The markets also unveiled plans to lift restrictions on the size of the maximum order of shares on the trading book.

"We are making good progress across a wide range of activities and today's proposals are one further link in the chain leading to our goal of barrier-free trading in Europe," the London Stock Exchange and the Deutsche Borse said in a joint statement.

The markets first outlined plans to create a unified pan-European market last July.

Lewis and Holyfield to fight again in September or October

LONDON (AFP) — Lennox Lewis and Evander Holyfield will fight again for boxing's heavyweight crown in September or October, Lewis' manager Frank Maloney confirmed on Sunday.

Holyfield has added his agreement to Lewis' for the re-match, designed to unify the heavyweight division after last week's New York fight between the two was controversially judged a draw.

British fighter Lewis was thought by most neutral observers to have won the first fight at Madison Square Garden.

Promoter Don King, who also promoted the first fight, on Sunday confirmed Holyfield's agreement for a fight which is almost certain to take place in the United States, possibly at the 65,000-capacity Yankee Stadium in New York.

The re-match is set to earn

Lewis and Holyfield up to \$20 million each in an even split of the purse.

Lewis, the WBC champion, had already put his name to paper for a re-match under the contractual terms of the first WBC-WBA-IBF bout last week.

Maloney said there was an outside chance of the bout being staged in Britain, but the United States was the most likely venue.

Lewis said: "I think the re-match will break every record in boxing history. The result was a travesty but in another way it's made everybody in the world aware of boxing."

"It's so good to get it on. Lennox is the uncrowned, undisputed champion but this time he will put it beyond doubt and walk away with the belts. This time Lennox will probably step into the ring as favourite."

"Boxing needs this fight, there was no other way for Lewis or Holyfield to go. They had to have this fight

to put the record straight. "Holyfield being the man and the warrior he is, there is no way he could have walked away from it. If he did he would have to have walked away from boxing."

Maloney said there was an outside chance of the bout being staged in Britain, but the United States was the most likely venue.

Lewis said: "Why can't the re-match happen tomorrow? I'm looking forward to doing it this time. I will be lifted even more by the whole country being behind me, the support has kept me going."

King is keen on a venue which could at least double the 'live' gate receipts of the first fight. Madison Square Garden would be doubly keen to be associated with the promotion after the furore of last weekend's clash, which has caused an investigation in America.

The fight judging is the subject of an investigation.

Barca, Bayern, Bordeaux and Lazio crank up title charge

PARIS (AFP) — The booming B's were at it again at the weekend as Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Bordeaux bolstered their respective title challenges with another three points — even if style was not their watchword.

Lewis looked to have done enough to become undisputed champion, but scores of 115-113 for Holyfield from New Jersey judge Eugenia Williams and 115-115 from Britain's Larry O'Connell enabled Holyfield to go home with his WBA and IBF crowns intact.

The fight judging is the subject of an investigation.



Cagliari's Patrick Mboma of Cameroon jubilates after scoring one of his three goals during the Serie A soccer match against Empoli in Cagliari. Cagliari beat Empoli 5-1 (AFP photo)



Real Mallorca's Ariel Lopez (C) shoots past Deportivo La Coruna's Songo (L) of Cameroon as Deportivo La Coruna's Schuerrer (R) looks on in a Liga match in Palma de Mallorca. Deportivo La Coruna won 2-1 (AFP photo)

Feyenoord slumped 4-1 at Willem II Tilburg, who have found a rich vein of form over the past two months to move into the top four.

But Feyenoord's second defeat of the season still left them eight points clear of nearest rivals Vitesse Arnhem, who triumphed 1-0 at Ajax with an early Nikos Machias goal.

Feyenoord now have 58 points from their 24 matches, while Arnhem have 50 having played a game more.

Ajax's first home reverse pushed them down from third to fifth behind PSV Eindhoven, who completed a miserable weekend for Rotterdam by crushing Feyenoord's city neighbours Sparta 5-0 away from home.

In Portugal, Porto won 3-1 at Salgueiros to stay three points clear of neighbours Boavista, who could only draw at home to Vitoria Setubal.

Graeme Souness' Benfica are six points adrift following a disappointing 1-1 stalemate at Uniao Leiria.

Benfica's city rivals Sporting Lisbon are fourth after they ran out 3-1 winners at Maritimo Funchal on Madeira.



Defending champion Marcelo Rios of Chile returns a shot to Byron Black of Zimbabwe during their third round match at the Lipton Championships at Key Biscayne (AFP photo)



Nicolas Kiefer of Germany eyes the ball as he returns a backhand to Patrick Rafter of Australia in the third round of The Lipton Championships tennis tournament. Kiefer won 7-6 (7-5), 6-4 (AFP photo)

set point in the tiebreaker to finish off Henman in two: 6-4, 7-6 (9/7).

Greg Rusedski kept Britain in the hunt, breezing through a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Hendrik Dreeckman.

Rusedski survived a break point on his final service game to complete a straightforward victory over the 24-year-old German, ranked 102 in the world.

Fourth seeded Alex Corretja of Spain had to struggle to get past Paraguay's Ramon Delgado 6-4, 1-6, 6-4.

Seventh and eighth seeds Richard Krajicek and Marcelo Rios made it safely through to the round of 16.

Krajicek beat compatriot Jan Siemerink and Rios beat Zimbabwe's Byron Black.

Women's action was highlighted by the night match between second-seeded American Lindsay Davenport and Italy's Silvia Farina.

In day matches, France's Australian Open finalist Amelie Mauresmo was stunned by Russian Elena Likhovtseva 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-1.

World No. 1 and top seed Martina Hingis advanced with ease, as did second-seeded American Lindsay Davenport, third-seeded American Monica Seles and seventh seed Steffi Graf of Germany.

Graf has been one of the most successful players at the Lipton, winning five titles and compiling a 57-5 record. She hasn't lost a match here since the 1993 final.

"It's been going extremely well," said Graf. "The way I was going out there, I've been really going for my shots, serving extremely well, returning well. It seems whatever I'm trying out there, it really is going in the right direction."

Sociedad played out the final 13 minutes against Barcelona with ten men after Fuentes was ordered off for a foul on Cucu's strike partner Patrick Kluitver. Two of half a dozen Dutchmen in a formation short of the services of Luis Figo and Luis Enrique.

Sociedad had started brightly and might have gone ahead but De Pedro's fourth-minute effort came back of the post with keeper Ruud Hesp beaten.

Valencia slipped below Vigo to third after they dropped two points in a 1-1 home draw with Real Zaragoza on Sunday evening. Gustavo Lopez scored on 18 minutes to put the visitors in front but Romanian international Adrian Ilie equalised shortly after half-time to save a point.

Real Madrid, keen to get back into the title race after their European Cup exit in Kiev, saw off lowly Extremadura 2-0 at the Bernabeu Stadium with goals from Raul, set up by Davor Suker on the half hour, and Juan Francisco Juanito own goal shortly after the break.

But Real remain seven points off the pace.

Elsewhere, in a battle of UEFA Cup hopefuls, Mallorca — fourth at start of play — went down 2-1 at home to Deportivo La Coruna, allowing the visitors to move ahead of them.

In Italy, Lazio and Fiorentina lead the way in what looks like a two-horse

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Elsewhere, in a battle of

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Prince Ali urges more support for soccer team players

AMMAN — HRH Prince Ali, president of the Jordan Football Association (JFA), has given directives to release national team players from their working commitments to enable them to devote more time for training and preparation for the Aug. 15-31 Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament. Earlier, Prince Ali met with working and retired referees as well as the president of clubs and discuss their needs and concerns, after he formed a new committee in charge of managing the JFA.

Najjar runner up in table tennis

AMMAN — Jordan's Tetyana Najjar came runner-up while Alia Tuffaha finished seventh in the women's singles at the Arab Tennis-Table Federation's Championship which concluded in Beirut on Sunday. Najjar lost 3-0 to 21-year-old Besant Othman of Tunisia 21-16, 10-21, 14-21. Earlier, Najjar and Tuffaha won the gold medal in the women's double. They dedicated their win to the memory of His Majesty King Hussein who passed away on Feb. 7. Jordan's Iyad Maknai and Mustafa Rida took the 10th and 11th places respectively.

Bodybuilding team to be finalised today

AMMAN — The finals of the Kingdom's Bodybuilding Championship will be held on Tuesday following which winners will be selected for the national team. President of the building Federation Abdul Menem Abu Touq said international champion Mustafa Hasanein will keep his position in the team, adding that national team players will get JD180 monthly from the Jordan Olympic Committee in support of their training and other expenses. According to Abu Touq winners in the national championship will take part in the Middle East Championship and the Mediterranean Tournament in Portugal May 12-17.

Russian coach to train boxers

AMMAN — The Jordan Boxing Federation has contracted a Russian coach to train the national team as part of preparations for the Pan-Arab Games. The Russian coach represented his country in the 1972 Munich Olympics, trained several Russian teams and helped the Iraqi team win the 1987 championship.

Compiled by Ahmad Khairi

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Zidane in wax museum

PARIS (AFP) — Two members of France's 1998 World Cup-winning team — midfielder Zinedine Zidane and goalkeeper Fabien Barthez — were Monday inaugurated into the Musee Grevin, France's leading waxworks museum. Barthez, however, did not show quite the same timing as he did in completing a shutout during France's 3-0 final win over Brazil. He arrived 30 minutes late for the unveiling ceremony of the lifesize replicas of himself and Zidane. Le Musee Grevin was created in 1882 by journalist Arthur Meyer to pay tribute to achievers in various fields.

Armenian coach promises tough time for Russia and France

YEREVAN (AFP) — Armenian national team coach Suren Barsegian expects his team to provide Russia and France with tough opposition in their European Championships qualifying matches later this month. Even though few observers expect his unfancied side to do well enough to secure a berth in the Euro 2000 finals, Barsegian told AFP that the Armenian side will be ambitious in the remaining Group Four qualifiers. "We have a great chance to check our real strength in the matches against the world champions France and we will try to gain a positive experience out of it," the Armenian head coach said. "Our team will not be favourites in the matches against Russia and France but it does not mean those teams already have three points in their pocket," he said. "It will not be a piece of cake for them." Barsegian said he admired the playing styles of the French and Ukrainian teams and tipped those sides to qualify from Group Four for the final stages of the competition. Armenia face Russia on March 27 at Yerevan and play France in Paris on March 31.

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FIFA's Blatter taking legal action

ZURICH (AP) — FIFA boss Sepp Blatter is taking legal action against the author of a new British book, which claims his election as president last summer was rigged, FIFA announced here on Monday.

The allegations appear in "How they stole the game" by English author David Yallop, which Blatter is taking legal action to stop being published: He has already had the book banned in Switzerland.

The book has already been published in Germany and the Netherlands and is due to appear shortly in Britain.

Extracts of the book were printed in The Observer newspaper on Sunday. The book claims that twenty members of FIFA allegedly accepted a million dollars in bribes to fix the election of Blatter.

They each received \$50,000 from the ruler of a Middle Eastern state — who had the money flown in by private jet — to back Blatter for football's top job, the book alleges.

Based on the German translation, Blatter, who is a Swiss resident, filed a personal complaint on October 26 before the Meilen Tribunal, in Zurich, stating he was libelled 16 times in the book.

The FIFA boss fought a bitter election battle with UEFA President Lennart Johansson of Sweden to take over from the retiring Joao Havelange as head of world football last summer.

The FIFA statement added that the action being taken by Blatter was personal and not on behalf of the organisation.

Orthodoxi prepares to host West Asia Basketball Championship

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Five out of seven teams have confirmed their participation in the 2nd West Asia Basketball Championship organised by Al Orthodoxi Club between April 12-17, club spokesman Fadi Zureikat said late Sunday.

Following a meeting of the West Asia Zone Federation Zureikat told a press conference that talks were under way with Lebanon's Al Hikma Club to participate in the six-day tournament.

Al Hikma, Arab champions for the last two years, have two professional players from Nigeria and Senegal, and are expected to be the tournament's powerhouse being Lebanon's top team and the champion of 1st West Asia Zone Championship last year.

Syrian champions Al Wibda — Al Orthodoxi's arch rival — are expected to confirm participation within the coming few days, added Zureikat.

The other teams taking part are the Iraq's Air Force Club, the Palestinian National Authority national team, Baykon from Iran, Yemen's Al Mina' and Jordanian champions Al Orthodoxi Club.

According to observers, Al Orthodoxi Club and Al Hikma are the favourite teams to reach the final match.

"Al Hikma and Al Orthodoxi will be fighting for first place. However, the hosts do not stand a chance against Al Hikma which is expected to recruit NBA player, Rony Setkali, who used to play with the Miami Heat," said a former basketball coach who requested anonymity.

The winning team will qualify to play in the Asian Clubs Championship which is slated to start on May 22 in Beirut, said Hagop Khacherian, secretary general of Asian Basketball Confederation's (ABC) West Asia Zone.

According to Khacherian, the champion of Asia, will participate, for the first time, in the McDonalds Championship held in Italy later this year.

Ten days ago the ABC reached an understanding with the International Basketball Federation — FIBA — to allow the Asian champion to take part in the annual event biennially," Khacherian told the Jordan Times.

The McDonalds Championship is considered one of the most important tournaments because the world's top teams usually compete including the NBA champion, two teams from Europe, one team from South America and the best team from Oceania.

The 2nd West Asia Basketball Championship, sponsored by Fine

company, is expected to attract scores of Jordanians who might have a hard time securing a place at Al Orthodoxi Club hall which can accommodate up to 1,500 people.

"The club will use a big projector to air the matches to people who will not be able to find tickets," said Zureikat.

According to Zureikat, Al Orthodoxi's team will be represented by the club's players. An earlier idea of enabling national team players to join the Al Orthodoxi's lineup as part of preparations for this summer's Pan-Arab Games was not yet finalised yet.

Officials declined to mention how that set-up would be arranged.

The event will be aired live on Jordan Television while the private Lebanon satellite station LBC took the broadcasting rights of the tournament.

The West Asia Championship was initiated with the formation of ABC's West Asia Zone last year and two championships have been held so far. The women's tournament and the 1st West Asia Championship in which five teams took part.

Al Hikma won the title playing against Al Mina', Al Wibda, Iran's Zobahan and Jordan's former champions Al Jazireh.

Magic, Jazz, Sonics lose as Raptors upset Knicks

ORLANDO (R) — The Los Angeles Lakers played the first half like they were on a leave of absence such as the one Dennis Rodman just returned from, but they came to life in the second half to surprise the Magic.

Kobe Bryant scored 33 of his career-high 38 points after intermission as the Lakers rallied from a 20-point halftime deficit Sunday to stun the Orlando Magic 115-104.

"It's something I worked on all summer — hitting the open shots," Bryant said. "I have been noticing teams giving me the open shot lately. I hope they keep thinking like that." Bryant put on an awesome display in the second half, shooting 13-of-16 from the field. He made seven straight shots at one point in the third quarter, bringing back the Lakers (18-9) from a 63-43 halftime deficit. The Magic was outscored 41-20 in the fourth quarter.

"Kobe could have shot the ball from over the half-court area today," Magic forward Horace Grant said. "He was in the zone, so to speak. Guys had their hands up on him. He's just that talented to make shots." Shaquille O'Neal, once the cornerstone of the Orlando franchise, added 31 points and won for the first time at the Orlando arena as a member of the Lakers.

Booed every time he touched the ball, O'Neal got the last laugh by going 14-of-19 from the field with his fifth straight victory. In Boston, Mark Bryant scored the first four points of a 6-0 run midway through overtime and Brent Barry made four crucial free throws in the final six seconds as the Chicago Bulls held off the Boston Celtics, 95-92.

Barry and Toni Kukoc led

Chicago with 20 points and Bryant added 18 for the Bulls.

In Cleveland, Wesley Person scored 22 points and Shawn Kemp made a pair key defensive plays down the stretch as the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the woeful New Jersey Nets 88-85.

Stephon Marbury's 3-point attempt to tie it for New Jersey (4-20) as the clock wound down bounced off the rim twice before falling to the floor.

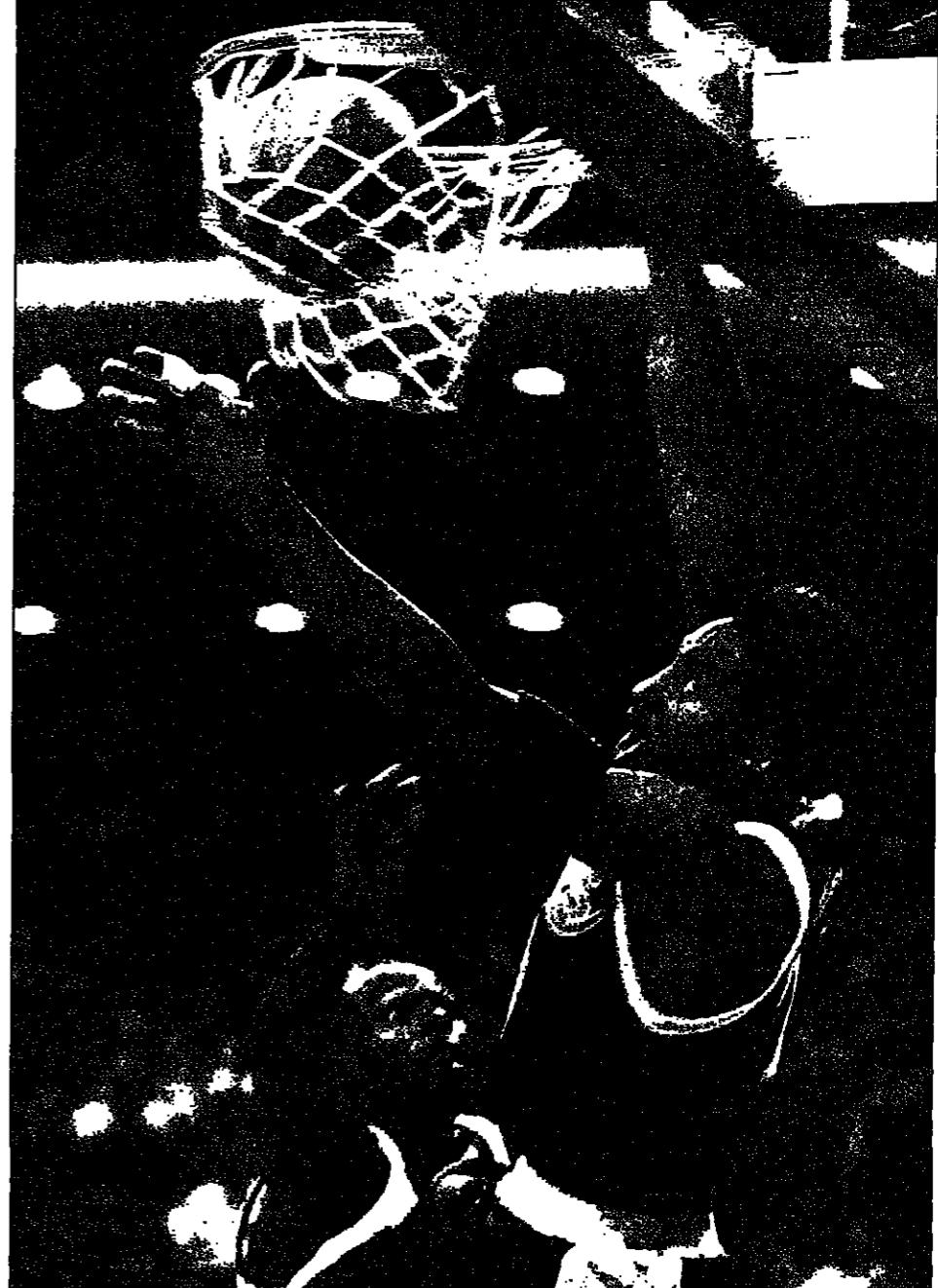
In Denver, the Denver Nuggets blew all but one point of a 29-point lead but held off the Seattle SuperSonics 102-98.

Antonio McDyess went 7-of-10 from the foul line and scored nine of his 23 points in the fourth quarter to stave off the Sonics.

At Minnesota, the Los Angeles Clippers snapped a 20-game road losing streak and won for just the second time this season as Darrick Martin scored 22 points in a 100-85 victory over the slumping Minnesota Timberwolves.

In Milwaukee, Sam Cassell made his debut in a Milwaukee Bucks uniform and took just one game to reinjure his ankle.

Playing his first game since being acquired from the Nets in a huge three-way trade March 11, Cassell turned his right ankle in Milwaukee's 94-87 loss to the Charlotte Hornets.



Los Angeles Lakers guard (R) Kobe Bryant slam dunks the ball past Orlando Magic guard Darrell Armstrong (L) at the Arenas in Orlando, FL. Bryant had a career high of 38 points to lead the Lakers to a 115-104 win (AFP photo)

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Turk PM survives no-confidence vote

Prosecutor seeks ban on Virtue

ANKARA (R) — Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit on Monday crushed an opposition attempt to topple him and staved off efforts led by the Islamist Virtue Party to delay April elections.

But the dramatic announcement of moves to ban Virtue, the largest group in parliament, could herald a spring of high political tension in Turkey.

A prosecutor who applied to the chief prosecutor's office on Monday to ban Virtue accused party supporters of aiming to set up a state based on Islamic principles.

Ecevit's victory in a censure motion ended 10 days of parliamentary drama.

Stocks edged up after the vote on hopes a strong government, including Ecevit, would be returned to conduct vital economic reforms.

"It happened as we expected," said Mesut Yilmaz, head of the Motherland Party, widely expected to form a government alliance with Ecevit's Democratic Left Party.

"This shows the anti-election front has been smoothed."

A total of 236 deputies

voted for the censure motion, well short of the 276 needed to topple Ecevit.

The parliamentary speaker also refused to allow discussion of a Virtue-backed motion to delay the polls. He referred it to a parliamentary commission where it will likely die before Turks vote on April 18.

Virtue leaders were apparently using the censure vote and the motion to delay polls as a lever to win repeal of laws under which leading Islamists had been prosecuted and former Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan banned from politics for five years.

Commentators saw the hand of Erbakan behind Virtue's strategy.

Armed Forces Chief of General Staff Huseyin Kirikoglu said last week a delay in polls would lead to chaos.

He also warned that any bid to repeal laws cited by Virtue would be unacceptable.

The army, which sees itself as guardian of the country's secularist order, edged an Islamist-led government from power in 1997. Since then it has backed a crackdown on Islamist leaders.

That campaign reached

new heights on Monday when prosecutor Nuh Mete Yuksel applied to the country's hard-line chief prosecutor for a ban on Virtue.

Yuksel's application also cited meetings of Virtue members at Erbakan's house as evidence he maintains control of the party despite his ban.

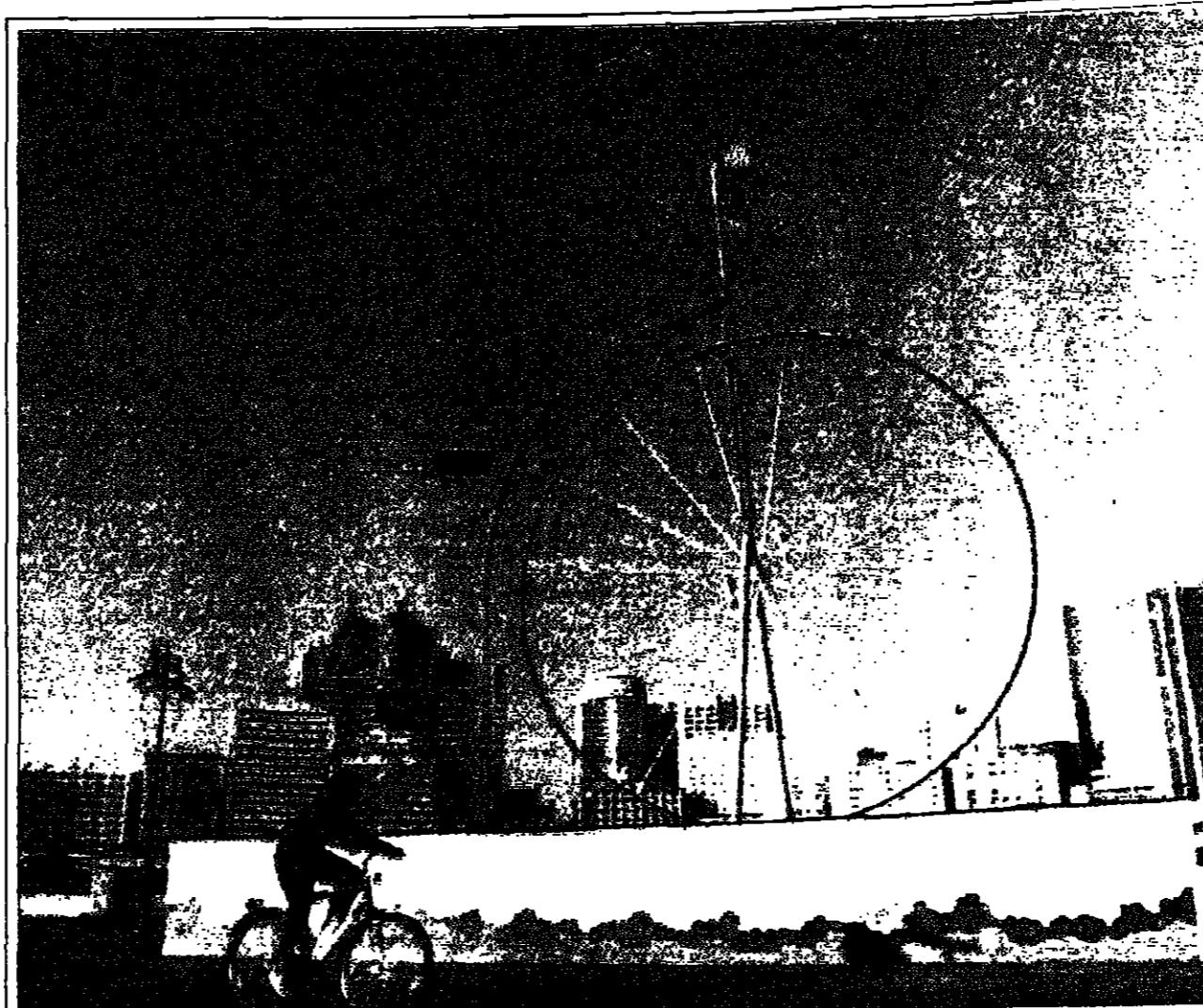
"Turkey will be the worse for this move. We did not expect this [ban application] during the election process," Abdullah Gul, a senior Virtue deputy, told Reuters.

Chief Prosecutor Vural Savas, who imposed a ban on Virtue's predecessor, Welfare, in 1998 must now decide whether to refer Virtue to the constitutional court.

Savas has at times suggested that Virtue, despite its more moderate image, is little more than a reincarnation of the banned Welfare Party.

Savas recently applied for a ban on the country's main legal Kurdish party, Hadep, arguing it had close links with captured guerrilla chief Ocalan's Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

He sought leave to impose an interim ban on Hadep for the polls but was refused.



ON YOUR BIKE: A cyclist passes by a large bicycle, designed by a UAE engineer who claims it is the biggest in the world, on display at the Dubai creek on Monday (Reuters photo)

Pope will visit Holy Land in March 2000 — Israeli minister

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Pope John Paul II will make an historic first visit to the Holy Land for Millennium celebrations, Israel's tourism minister said in a press statement on Monday after meeting with the chairman of the Vatican's Millennium Committee.

Tourism Minister Moshe Katsav "received reports that the Pope will arrive in March 2000 for a visit in the Palestinian Authority and Israel," his spokeswoman Orly Doron said.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the trip "for now has not been set," adding that neither the date nor the itinerary has been worked out.

Israel TV said the Pope would arrive March 24 for a three-day visit to the region. Doron said she believed the Pope would spend three days in the region but would not confirm a date for the trip.

Earlier on Monday, Katsav held talks with Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, chairman of the Vatican's committee for the Millennium, to discuss Israel's preparations for hosting millions of pilgrims in the year 2000.

"The year 2000 is a celebration of the birth of Christ and his life in this land, therefore it is more normal for him [the Pope] to come," Etchegaray said.

The cardinal, who spoke to reporters at a joint news conference in Jerusalem on Monday, did not say that such a trip had been finalised however.

Israel has been pushing for a papal visit to boost millennium celebrations. Pope Paul VI went to the Holy Land in 1964. John Paul has expressed a keen desire to visit Jerusalem but the Pope's presence there would be sensitive because the Vatican and Israel differ over the future of the city, which is special to Jews, Christians and muslims.

In February, John Paul accepted an invitation from Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to visit Bethlehem, the site of Christ's birthplace. The Pope has long wanted to visit the Holy Land but has

deferred any journey because of the politically charged atmosphere of the region.

The Vatican has hinted recently that such a trip was being studied. Recently the Pope delivered an exceptional bull encouraging pilgrims to Rome for 2000 celebrations to continue on to the Holy Land.

Some three-four million pilgrims are expected to do so, and both Israel and the Palestinians are looking forward to an economic mini-boom.

Katsav said that Israel is cooperating with the Vatican and the Palestinian National Authority to ensure access for pilgrims to all Christian sites over the year 2000.

British television body suspends Kurdish station

LONDON (R) — A British television watchdog said on Monday it had ordered a Kurdish channel to cease broadcasting for 21 days after it showed calls for violence in Turkey.

The Independent Television Commission (ITC) said it had given London-based Med TV three weeks to convince it to allow them to continue broadcasting.

"The essence of these recent breaches is that the broadcasts contain calls to direct violence and criminal actions of various kinds," ITC's director of programmes and cable, Sarah Thane, told reporters.

The broadcasts were made after the arrest of Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan last month, and feature messages from Kurdish leaders calling for acts of violence in Turkey.

Turkey says guerrillas of Ocalan's Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) finance Med TV. The ITC said it received calls from Turkish authorities to revoke the licence, but the decision was made purely on legal grounds.

"We have a job given us by parliament to do, and we must do it and do it fairly," Thane

said.

Med TV's founder Hikmet Tabak said the ITC had bowed to Turkish pressure to suspend the licence.

"We will challenge the decision legally, we have a strong argument," Tabak told Reuters by telephone from Brussels.

He said Kurds in Europe, Turkey and the Middle East watch news and cultural programmes broadcast on Med TV, which he said provides a focal point for the Kurdish diaspora.

"We were a voice for all Kurds," Tabak said.

The ITC showed reporters a clip from a Med TV news broadcast which included a broadcast from a Kurdish rebel which according to an ITC transcript, said: "Our patriotic masses in Europe should not cross the boundaries of democratic measures... The Kurdish people in Turkey, however, should adopt all kinds of fighting methods without losing any time."

The ITC said it had formally warned Med TV for breaches of its code on impartiality and inciting crime, and fined it 90,000 pounds (\$146,400) in January 1998.

Basatin and Telai Zeinhom

are impoverished areas of northern Cairo near the capital's Christian and Muslim cemeteries.

Basatin clinic will provide

Hillary Clinton opens health clinic in Egypt

CAIRO (AP) — U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton on Monday pledged \$34.4 million for healthcare in Egypt after inaugurating a U.S.-funded low-cost outpatient clinic here for the poor.

"First Lady Hillary Clinton announced \$30 million for family planning activities and \$14.4 million" to promote the health of mothers and babies in children, prenatal delivery and post-natal assistance for mothers, a U.S. embassy statement said.

The "new horizons" Telai Zeinhom youth project was founded by the Evangelical Coptic Church in Cairo, with USAID funds, to provide literacy and leadership skills to girls and young women.

The message is the same all over the world that women should have equal opportunity to be well educated and help solve problems in the family and community," Clinton told young women at the centre.

"If women are not educated society cannot develop," she said, adding that the United States was still grappling with the problem of illiteracy.

Since 1986, USAID has provided \$31 million for family planning activities and \$45 million for maternal and child health services in Egypt.

Clinton accompanied her daughter Chelsea, arrived Sunday afternoon in Cairo on her first visit to Egypt ahead of stops in Tunisia and Morocco to campaign for women's rights, healthcare for children and promote Arab-U.S. ties.

She ends the tour April 1.

Former Beirut hostage sues Iran for \$100 million

WASHINGTON (R) — Former Beirut hostage Terry Anderson filed a \$100 million lawsuit against Iran on Monday, accusing it of being responsible for sponsoring his kidnapping by a militant Islamic group 14 years ago.

Anderson's lawyer, Stuart Newberger, said the suit was filed in the U.S. District Court in Washington and would be translated into Farsi before being sent via diplomatic channels to the Iranian government.

"We hope that Iran will respond to the complaint, not simply because it is the right thing to do but because their presi-

dent has said lately that Iran wants to join the family of nations and that he respects the rule of law," Newberger told Reuters after filing the lawsuit.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and its ministry of information and security are named as defendants in the suit, which demands \$100 million in compensatory damages and unspecified punitive damages.

Anderson was chief Middle East correspondent for Associated Press news agency when he was kidnapped in Beirut in March 1985. He was held longer than any other American hostage and was

blindedfolded and kept in chains for almost all his nearly seven years in captivity until his release in December 1991.

Newberger said the lawsuit also listed Anderson's wife, Madeline Bassil and their daughter Sulome, 13, who was born three months after he was taken captive. They want redress for emotional distress and their long separation from Anderson.

Anderson can sue Iran in a U.S. court under laws which allow legal action against nations that allegedly sponsor terrorism that kills or injures U.S. citizens. Previous damages awards have proved

difficult to collect but Anderson might benefit from a law passed by Congress last October that requires the Treasury and State Departments to help recover damages from countries found guilty of sponsoring terrorism that maims or kills an American.

Anderson's lawsuit cites his captors as the Hezbollah (Party of God), a guerrilla group operating in Lebanon.

Speaking from his home in Athens, Ohio, Anderson told NBC's "Today" programme the Iranians had sponsored, paid and helped to plan and execute his kidnapping.



Woman receives card 47 years late

ISLAMABAD (R) — An 87-year-old Rawalpindi woman got a shock when she received a postcard from two dead sisters in Florida. The postcard was sent with a two-cent U.S. stamp in 1952 and reached her home near the Pakistani capital on March 8, the Urdu Jang newspaper said. The American-born woman, Florence, told the newspaper that her two sisters died years ago.

Policeman torches patrol car in drunken brawl

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — A Kuwaiti policeman on duty in this Gulf emirate where alcohol is outlawed torched his patrol car in a drunken brawl with his partner, a newspaper said Monday. After his partner struck him on the head with a whiskey bottle, causing serious injury, the policeman retaliated by setting their patrol car alight. Al Rai Al Aam said.

Risk of lower IQs by sleeping less?

LONDON (R) — Britons are missing too much sleep and risk becoming mentally retarded, sleep researchers warned. Shift-work, longer working days and a "sleep-is-for-wimps" culture" meant Britain was moving toward a 24-hour society. Professor Jim Horne of the Sleep Research Centre at Loughborough University told the Observer newspaper.

Falling one hour short of eight hours sleep a night could temporarily knock one point off a person's IQ. Fifteen points could easily be lost in a week, which would make an average person with an IQ of about 100 "borderline retarded," according to the researchers.

"Even in our leisure lives, sleep is seen as a waste of time. Young people go clubbing. An early night is not cool," said Horne.

Welfare recipients thank rich for tax support

BLOEMENDAAL (AP) — It was a message they weren't likely to get from the government: Thanks for paying your taxes. Welfare recipients went door-to-door to the homes of some of Holland's most well-off taxpayers over the weekend, delivering handmade gifts as an expression of gratitude for their contributions to the public till. "We want to thank taxpayers, and presents are a fine reward," said 21-year-old Elena Simons, a student who thought up the idea. Seven Amsterdam welfare recipients, including several artists travelled to the estate-studded coastal town of Bloemendaal, about 20 kilometres west of Amsterdam, to give away their own artwork and other gifts.

'Love' motels complain about Asian crisis

MANILA (AP) — Motel operators in the Philippines complained to congress on Monday that the Asian financial crisis is wreaking havoc on business with fewer tourists visiting their establishments. The town and country chain of motels has had to resort to giving away a dish of crispy pig knuckles to couples who check into luxury suites, its manager Legorio Espiritu Santo told a public hearing of the house of representatives ways and means committee.

Motel chains which could not keep pace with discounts have suffered lower occupancy rates, said Edmundo Las, owner of the Hotel Sogo group. Motel operators testified at the hearing to oppose a proposed law that would impose a value added tax on the establishments. The committee was told the Wise Inn chain offered low-cost 145-peso (\$3.71) rooms, but guests must leave after three hours.